Glad Tidings

January/February 2013

22 Children in Poverty in Canada by Rev. Helen Smith

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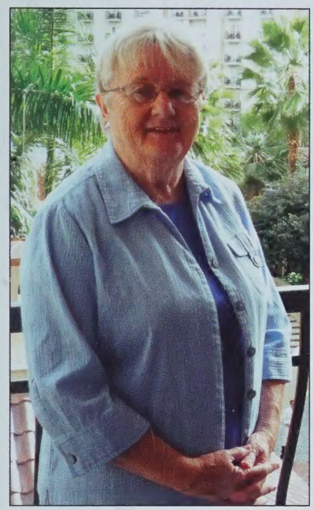
President's Message



As we begin this new year, with its hopes, dreams, and challenges for our WMS, we know that God has a plan for us. We have already begun planning for the 100th Anniversary of the WMS in 2014, and it is a great time to refocus and celebrate a new, clear direction.

Throughout the years, the WMS has been an important part of my life. I have seen many changes, and in the past year the Council Executive has made some bold ones, proceeding carefully and wisely. We began by looking at our strengths, such as strong leadership roles in the church and a passionate networking system. We realized that the image of WMS has become outdated, and yet, many feel that the church itself does not meet the needs of women. A woman's group is needed in the church and does have a definite role. We certainly saw this in the success and the energy level of the first Presbyterian Women's National Gathering in 2011.

At the Council meeting in May 2012, a motion was passed that a WMS 'Futures' Task Force be set up with the mandate 'to develop a vision/purpose, program, and structure for an organization that would address the interests and concerns of all women of the church.' A second Task Force was formed to look at our finances over the past years and project for the future. At its November meeting, the Council Executive made some decisions that could take the WMS into the future with a bold new vision. When the WMS Council meets in May, 2013, these decisions will be revealed, discussed, and voted on.

If the new vision for the WMS is accepted, changes won't happen all at once, and the past and present of the WMS will be honoured. There will be potential roadblocks, but as the WMS has always been the voice of women who are concerned about the mission of the church, we are the ones to take a forward step, and be strong in our convictions. As proven over the years, WMS is made up of tireless, creative women, who bring their talents and skills to the task that God has given them. Whatever decision is made, it will be done with faith, love, and celebrating our past.

May the Gift of Christmas bless you with hope, peace, joy, and love throughout the year ahead.

Editorial

As I sat down today to give a final read through of our third study on Children in Poverty in Canada, it is a sunny, but cold, November day. We sent our children off to school with hats, gloves, and winter coats. Winter is certainly beginning, and by the time you read this, many of you will look out your windows and see a snowy landscape—winter in Canada! As I reflect on our third study on children in poverty, I think of the many families in Canada that have inadequate housing, especially as temperatures drop. I think of the story that the Rev. Helen Smith, our writer, shares regarding Jen. Brought on by many circumstances beyond her control, Jen becomes homeless as a young person. She is incarcerated many times, and becomes an incarcerated mother of twin boys. Her story brings me to tears, but thankfully, she is a success story. There are many that are not—families living in inadequate conditions, families living on the streets, and families having to be split up to have a roof over their heads. I encourage you to learn more about how you, and your WMS group or congregation, can make a difference.

You can also make a difference in the lives of families in the church. Looking around the church, many of us are concerned about the small number of children, youth, and young adults in our congregation. In a recent study, "Hemorrhaging Faith: Why and When Canadian Young Adults are Leaving, Staying and Returning to Church", we read that, "For every five Catholic and Mainline Protestant kids, who attended church at least weekly in the 1980s and '90s, only one still attends at least weekly now as an adult; for those raised in Evangelical traditions it is one in two."[i] Many are not only leaving the church, but also leaving behind their Christian faith. What struck me most about this study was that many young people claimed they did not feel the love of God, or have their questions about faith answered in the church. The authors of this report felt like we had only managed to give our children a very superficial understanding of the faith, certainly not enough to keep them in the church or in the faith, as adults. For those of us who have been involved in children and youth ministry for many years, this is not news. However, I do love that we now have some Canadian research regarding this and I pray that this will motivate the church to act.

In this edition of *Glad Tidings*, you will see how churches are doing just that. Logos is a great ministry for creating disciples of Jesus for life, not just babysitting children and youth until they are old enough to 'belong' in the church. Learn how Knox Waterloo is using this ministry. Messy Church is another creative ministry that aims to bring families back to church—it is a great entry for families that have little Biblical or church knowledge, or have schedules that do not allow attendance at traditional services. Finally, you can read an article by Spencer Edwards, Youth and Family Ministry Consultant for the Synod of Southwestern Ontario, which offers help for families on nurturing their children's faith. As a Christian parent, I know it is a challenge to find the time to nurture my own faith and the faith of my children. Some days I feel like I need all the help I can get. I pray that the congregation will be there when I need that support!

Wishing you all the best in 2013.

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[i] From the article, "Hemorrhaging Faith: Why and When Canadian Young Adults are Leaving, Staying and Returning to Church" by James Penner, Rachael Harder, Erika Anderson, Bruno Désorcy and Rick Hiemstra

Mission Awarenes Sunday

April 28, 2013

Theme: Missionaries 'R' Us

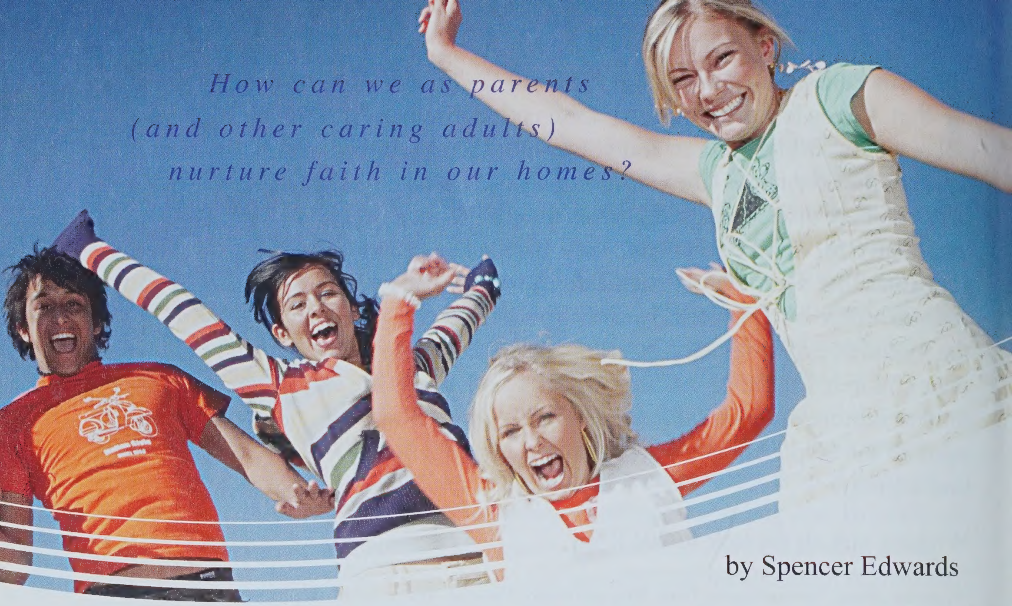
Scripture Readings: Isaiah 49:1–6; Matthew 9:35–38;
Psalm 85:8–13

Authors: Rev. Glenn and Mrs. Linda Inglis

A Change

The worship resource for Mission Awareness Sunday will not be mailed to WMS groups. You can get a copy of the litany, sermon, and children's story at www.wmspcc.ca/mission-awareness-sunday. A copy will also be emailed to those in our database. If you would like to receive an email, please contact amckeown@presbyterian.ca.

If you have any questions about this change, contact Alexis McKeown, 800-619-7301 ext. 319 or amckeown@presbyterian.ca



How can we as parents (and other caring adults) nurture faith in our homes?

Faith Formation Comes (Back) Home

by Spencer Edwards

There is a quite a lot of talk in church circles these days about faith, families, and "family ministry." What's it all about? Why all the interest?

Well, over the past three decades, there has been a lot of research into what makes people have a lifelong faith. One of the consistent findings has been the significance of parental influence. For example, The National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR), a large American study that looked at the faith of young people, found that, "parents are most important in forming their children's religious and spiritual lives … the best social predictor, although not a guarantee, of what the religious and spiritual lives of youth will look like is what the religious and spiritual lives of their parents do look like. Parents and other adults most likely will get what they are."[i] This recognition may be empowering to parents, or alarming, or both, but it is a fact worth taking seriously.

Consider this finding in light of the significant decline in church attendance among mainline

Protestants. It has been suggested that one of the major sources of this decline has been our inability to retain our 'own' children. The two are intrinsically related and our churches will continue to decline unless something changes.

Family faith formation, teaching our children how and why to be Christians, seems low on the priority list of many families. But this has not always been the case. Michael Brewer, pastor, writer, and professor, reminds us that, "the earliest congregations met in homes, and the central act of worship was a family meal. Not surprisingly, we hear of whole families being baptized together as a shared declaration of faith and trust in the risen Lord (for an example, see Acts 16:25–34). We cannot possibly understand the beginnings of Christianity apart from the significance of family. Faith was lived and experienced within families, and each believer found a place within the extended family of the church."

In more recent history, even a couple hundred years ago, parents and extended family were primarily responsible for teaching their children … and this was not limited to Christian education, it was all education. Our society has shifted to a model where this is no longer the case for most families. Most of us don't grow our own food, make our own clothes, build our own homes, or educate our own children. Ours is a time of specialization. We have a 'specialty' and we rely on the 'specialties' of others. And, this seems to have extended to the realm of Christian nurture. Perhaps this is why parents have relegated the role of Christian education to others, to the experts!

Marilyn Sharpe knows firsthand the challenges of being a family. As a parent, grandparent, speaker, writer, and practical theologian, she aptly describes this change: "For the last fifty years, the congregation was placed in the centre, supported by its members. It was assumed that this is where all faith formation took place. In a time of professionalizing everything from education to fire fighting to coaching youth sports, parents looked to church professionals and those trained by church professionals to do all of Christian education, spiritual direction, and values inculcation for their children and youth. And we, who were church professionals, picked up that mandate and did our level best to fulfill those expectations. Inadvertently, we led parents, grandparents, godparents, aunts, uncles, neighbours, and friends to believe that they weren't needed in this arena. But this isn't biblical."

Though our intentions were good, it seems that we forgot the importance of parents, and other close adults, in passing along their faith to their children. Family faith matters and we must become more intentional in passing along our faith to the young. However, many of us don't even know where to begin.

So, how can we as parents (and other caring adults) nurture faith in our homes?

Vibrant Faith Ministries (www.vibrantfaith.org) suggests that there are four 'keys' that can help this to happen (of course, the exact way this looks will depend on the ages of your family members).

The *first* is Caring Conversation. It is the foundation of the other keys. Jim LaDoux, a presenter and coach with Vibrant Faith Ministries, describes it this way, "caring conversations express an interest in others, their hurts, their joys, their concerns and dreams, their values and faith. Caring conversation requires time to be available to listen and to speak."

It can include talking about the highs and lows of our day, discussing current issues, reflecting on something we have watched or heard (a movie, or a song), and asking 'good' questions (If you could live anywhere, where would it be? What is your first memory of the church?)

Devotions is the *second* key. Families reading the Bible and engaging in faith talk models the importance of hearing God's Word and living out our faith in our day-to-day lives. The thought of family devotions might seem intimidating at first, but there are many helpful resources available—great children's Bibles, daily devotionals, and activity books (the helpful staff at The Book Room are a great place to start). Start by spending time daily reading the Bible together and reflecting on it. Try a daily devotional. Consider having morning and evening prayers together as a family. If your family loves music, listen to worship music and sing together.

Third, Rituals and Traditions draw our attention to God in the midst of our daily life. They form a rhythm and shape our identity as Christians. Family life is full of rituals and traditions (whether intentional or not): pizza and movie nights, a visit to Tim Hortons after hockey practice, Thanksgiving with relatives, bedtime stories, annual vacations, and so on). Giving a blessing, saying a prayer, lighting a candle, and sharing a liturgy are just a few examples of faith rituals and traditions. When thinking about potential times for these practices, consider daily and weekly opportunities (meal times, bed times, arriving and departing, car time); church seasons (Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost); and growth milestones (first day of school, becoming a teenager, new job, graduations, driver's license).

Fourth, Service gives us practice in "walking the talk." Family service projects have been shown to be a vital way to pass on faith. Children and youth are greatly influenced by what they see in the lives of others, especially in their families. Opportunities for families to serve are all around. When children are young, you can shop together for food to donate to a food drive, or a toy for a Christmas toy drive. When children are older, you can serve a meal at a shelter, sort food at a food bank, or rake leaves or shovel snow for a neighbour. You can also choose a project from The Presbyterian Church in Canada's Gifts of Change catalogue and save money together to contribute to a specific project. Children will get excited about saving their coins until they have enough to buy a family a pig, provide maize and beans to an orphan, or provide a meal to a homeless individual.

Finally, I do want to mention that there is a tendency among some in the current conversation about families and faith to place the entire responsibility on parents, but I believe this is neither helpful nor faithful. I believe the best way forward is to see faith formation as a partnership between congregations and households. Mark DeVries, a Presbyterian minister in Nashville, who has been working in the field of intergenerational and family ministry for much of his ministry, suggests we must "find ways to undergird nuclear families with the rich support of the extended Christian family of the church and for these two formative families to work together in leading young people toward mature Christian adulthood." The church family and the home family must partner together to pass along the faith.

To that, I say "amen!"

Spencer Edwards is the Youth and Family Ministry Consultant for the Synod of Southwestern Ontario (The Presbyterian Church in Canada). He is married to Jody, and together they are working to nurture the faith of their two children.

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[i] Smith and Denton. SoulSearching: The Religious And Spiritual Lives Of Teenagers. USA: Oxford University Press, 2009 (reprint)

The LOGOS ministry has recently changed their name and become, GenOn Ministries. They believe their mission and calling is to: equip faith communities and families to develop lifelong disciples of all ages. They will continue to provide resources for the LOGOS weekly gatherings, but also offer resources for parents and families, and intergenerational programs other than LOGOS.

Let the Games Begin!

by Margaret Woods

"Let the Games Begin!" was the theme to start off the 20th year of LOGOS at Knox Presbyterian Church in Waterloo, Ontario. This mid-week ministry is for children and youth in Grades 1–12. It runs on Thursday nights from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m. from September to April.

The mission of LOGOS is "to nurture children, youth, adults, and families into a lifetime of Christian faith and discipleship through the development of meaningful relationships." Building these meaningful Christian relationships takes time—more time than Sunday morning allows for. We spend three hours every Thursday night practising our faith in a supportive environment. LOGOS acts as a bridge between weekly worship services, reminding everyone that living as disciples of Jesus is part of our whole week.

The LOGOS ministry was started in the United States in the 1950s and has grown to include several thousand churches in dozens of denominations worldwide. The LOGOS ministry model is divided into four parts, based on Acts 2:42 (NRSV): “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” We divide our Thursday evening into four periods. Students rotate through the different classes and we all (over 100 people!) share a meal in the third period.

Students participate in four areas each night:

1. **Worship Skills**
   We offer our gifts to God through vocal and instrumental music, drama and other performing arts, and prayer.
2. **Recreation**
   During craft and gym time, we practise the one rule of LOGOS: Treat every person as a child of God. No one is to treat others as if they do not matter.
3. **Bible Study**
   Classes explore the messages of the Bible and how they relate to our lives today.
4. **Family Time**
   Everyone joins together for a mixture of food, fun, and friendship.

Did you know that the majority of youth who commit their lives to a relationship with Jesus Christ do so by the age of 14? Our senior high group (Grades 9–12) is the critical group who deserve the highest priority since traditionally youth leave the church during their teen years. LOGOS helps high school students to gain self-esteem and learn to make right life decisions.

Knox is fortunate to have this thriving ministry. Currently, we have 63 students registered in Grades 1–12, and 90 adults participating in leading Knox LOGOS. And why do the children come? According to a very informal survey of the Grade 5 Bible Time class, “to be with my friends,” “to learn more about the Bible,” and “because my parents signed me up.” All very good reasons!

Our ministers, the Rev. Brooke Ashfield and the Rev. Linda Ashfield, provide ongoing leadership and participation, which communicates to the congregation and the young people the importance of this weekly ministry. Brooke is the Grade 3 Bible Time teacher, and delights in sharing the Old Testament stories of battles, hardships, and triumph. Linda, as the Senior High Bible Time teacher, engages the youth in discussions of the Bible and how to relate to the world as a Christian in today’s multicultural society.

We expect that a parent (or designated other adult) from each family registered will contribute to running the program. But we have many who help out who have no children in LOGOS—seniors, university and college students (including our graduates), families with children too young to participate yet (child care is available for them), and parents of LOGOS graduates. It doesn't matter what your background is. We have teachers, accountants, homemakers, business leaders, health-care and office workers, and university professors. From doing laundry and preparing meals to playing games and teaching about the Bible, there is a job to be done for everyone! These adults are referred to as adult participants, rather than volunteers, to underscore their importance in the program.

Sunday morning worship is not just for adults! It is essential to the spirituality of every person. LOGOS seeks to strengthen the commitment of youth and their families to worship. We encourage *everyone* to participate in weekly congregational worship. During Worship Skills, Grades 1–3 have been practising new songs and Grades 4–6 have been learning to play tone chimes, which they will be sharing at Sunday morning worship services. Jr. Highs have been enthusiastic about the opportunity to provide support for worship services: learning how to operate the audio-visual equipment, serving communion, and being responsible for Coffee Hour on some Sundays. Sr. Highs have provided dramatic presentations, shared personal prayers, and led Sunday School activities.

During Family Time, meals and table games centre around a weekly theme. Young people are assigned to tables with adults, who act as Table Parents for the year. Food is served "family style" around the table that has been set with real dishes and cutlery on a fabric tablecloth. Wouldn't disposable plates and a buffet be easier? Yes, but we learn to serve others and develop real relationships as we eat at a proper dinner table.

Recreation is a favourite time for the students. The emphasis is on co-operation and fun rather than competition. Playing floor hockey with toilet brushes as the sticks or a balloon as the puck puts a fun twist on things! We reveal ourselves in play, we strengthen friendships, and when conflicts occur, we practise our theology: "You are a child of God and I will treat you that way." We've heard that this can extend beyond the program to the school yard in how others are treated. Students also have the opportunity to express their creativity. It's amazing how a group of children can start with the same basic craft materials and instructions and all come out with different results!

A fee is paid by participating families to cover the cost of food, materials, and activities during LOGOS. No extra fundraising is expected to support the basic program. However, the students are involved in mission projects in an effort to teach them about others and provide them with an opportunity to serve. Jr. Highs have made jars of brownie and cookie mix to sell with the profits going to purchasing toys for the local "Angel Tree" at Christmas time. We also have two projects planned this year that will support programs for the homeless and poor in the area. Sr. Highs are having a sock, mitten, and hat drive (Knox Your Sox Off). The elementary students will collect boxes of cereal, pretzels, and goldfish crackers to make approximately 100 individual packages of snack mix. Last year, the clients of the program were very grateful to receive this special snack that had been prepared especially for them. LOGOS students, their families, and the entire congregation, are encouraged to donate to these outreach projects.

On a personal note, I have been participating in LOGOS for 12 years. I have had the opportunity to work in each of the four sections of the program, and now as LOGOS Director, I can really appreciate the hard work put in by so many over the years. I thank God for the vision of a small committee over 20 years ago that attended a workshop on LOGOS. Their desire to explore what could be done to provide further Christian nurture for the children and youth in our congregation has led to an amazing ministry!

Our family became part of the LOGOS program when my youngest daughter, Mandy, was in Grade 1. We moved to Alabama for two years, and one of her requests was that we attend a church with a LOGOS program. In a time of instability, this provided her with a familiar structure, and she and I were both able to make friends quickly as a result of our involvement. She has a bond with the others in the Senior High group that have been strengthened by this weekly program. LOGOS has helped her develop leadership skills which served her well as a counsellor at Cairn Presbyterian Camp last summer. Already she has been talking about what she'd like to do at LOGOS once she graduates from high school. It has been wonderful to watch her explore her faith and grow into a responsible young woman with the guidance of caring, faithful adults.

Margaret Woods is a long-time member of Knox Presbyterian Church, Waterloo,ON, where she is active in children's ministry. She works as the Office Administrator at Calvin Presbyterian Church in Kitchener, ON.

Messy® CHURCH

Getting Messy

by Colleen Wood

Families are busy. Between school, homework, sports, extended family, work, music lessons, and friends, families are busy. Some families have one, or both, parents working on a Sunday. Fitting in church on Sunday morning is often hard, and sometimes even impossible. Add to this is that, many families have no experience of church. It has never been a part of their routine, they don't understand the rituals, and they have limited knowledge and no understanding of the stories. So, how do we reach out to families with the Good News we have to share?

Messy Church can be the entry point, or even become church, for busy families, or families with little or know church background. It is a great multi-generational ministry and involves adults and children getting creative—even messy—together! Messy church began in 2004, in England, by a congregation that wanted to reach out to children, create more community in their suburban area, and help families grow in their faith.

My first real exposure to Messy Church was this summer when my church decided they would host it every Wednesday evening during July and August (most often Messy Church is hosted monthly). It seemed like a great idea for travelling families that might not be able to worship on Sunday morning. Beginning at 5:00 p.m., families would begin to arrive at the church to explore a theme. For Summer, we explored a different Bible character every week—one week was Esther, another David, another was Jesus.

We arrived to find, set up around the hall, several tables with activities that explored that day's Biblical person. So, for David the tables consisted of several activities, including making musical instruments to praise God with, making a photo frame to remind us that God sees us as someone special (including having our photo taken to put inside!), colouring sheets, and making a David 'trading' card. Each week, we made a new trading card to add to our collection! As a family, we would move around the tables, spending as much or as little time at each one as we choose. There were a few extra adults to guide us and get us started. Generally if there was a clay or play dough table, I would get trapped there for most of the time—my kids love creating in 3D!

After about an hour of creativity, talking and sharing with our family and others, we joined together for story time. A leader would tell the story, often just read out of a children's Bible, though usually with some audience participation—cheering for Queen Esther, for example. [My church kept this time simple for the Summer, but in a full Messy Church there is often a short worship time, with singing, presentation of the story (often as a simple drama), and prayers.] We would then share a grace together, usually sung, and enjoy dinner in community.

My kids loved Messy Church. Like many of our congregations, Sunday morning worship at our church is designed for an adult worshiper. This was for them. Many days, our three-year-old would wake

Photo: messychurch.org.uk

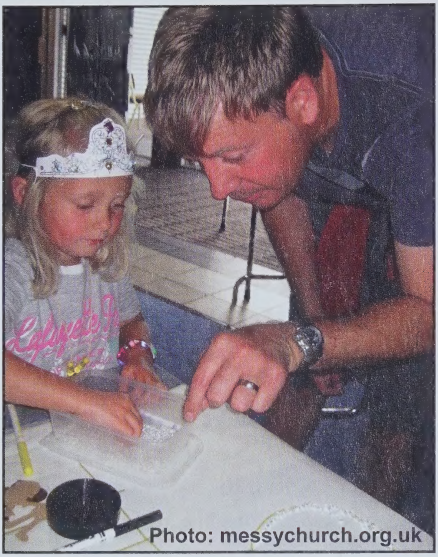
Photo: messychurch.org.uk

up asking if it was Messy Church day. Ian, our six-year-old, could move around as he learned and explored, not have his mom harping at him to sit still, our usual Sunday morning routine. We also all got more connected to other people in the church, and I loved not having to prepare dinner one night a week!

During the course of the evening, Messy Church provides a time for creativity, celebration (worship), and community. It is learning made fun. It is talking about faith with all ages, in a relaxed and accepting way. For me, it will not replace our regular Sunday morning worship, but it was a great addition to Sunday morning! And, research is showing that it is making a difference in the faith of families.

A recent article out of Wycliffe's College Institute of Evangelism asked what Messy Church was accomplishing. Judy Paulsen, pastor of Christ Church Anglican in Oshawa, Ontario, explored Messy Church as part of her doctoral research and found that families involved in Messy Church increased their biblical knowledge, increased their faith conversations within a family, and experienced an increase in both worship and prayer time.[i] For us, it was great to explore the same story together—Sunday morning, we are often learning about different things. It allowed us to share, learn, and ask questions together.

Many churches are concerned with the lack of families with children in worship. This might be a first step to getting them through the doors and nurturing their faith at home and in community. During the Summer, the majority of participants were regular Sunday morning worshippers, but there were a few that I rarely saw out on a Sunday morning, and at least one family that had not been attending church regularly. (They came out to Sunday worship the next week!)

Yes, Messy Church is a lot of work. The Messy Church resources, website, and books help with the planning. I will leave you with one question, "What would you be willing to do to see your child, grandchild, god-child, niece, nephew, or family friend, worshipping and learning about God on a regular basis?"

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[i] The entire article can be found at, http://institute.wycliffecollege.ca/2012/09/what-is-messy-church-actually-accomplishing/

Hi! We are Waiting for You

by Audrey Cameron

I was in my twenties before I realized that my little country church was not the 'norm'. I was active in my own congregation and though my experiences with youth programs took me to other congregations, I never clued in that every church did not have every one, of any age, worship together. Mine did. And I am grateful.

I can remember my first worship bag experience. It took the form of my mother's purse. It was filled with quiet toys that we saw only on Sundays (or funerals or …) and so they held our fascination. There were Bible Story books, age appropriate for me and my siblings. There were Cheerios in small bags, for snacking, and a drink for the inevitable thirst. As we grew older, Mom's 'worship bag' had less treats and would hold instead, a Bible Word Search Book. We had to go to Dad's pocket for the peppermint and the pen!

I do not remember the first time I read in church or sang in the choir. I do not remember the first time I greeted or took up the offering. They just naturally happened. Old and young sang together. Old and young took turns leading a responsive Psalm. Old and young—both dressed for the Christmas Pageant. I thought this was how it was at church.

It was a shock for me, when I began serving the church in the role of Synod Youth Ministry, to discover that my childhood experience was an anomaly. Naïve? Maybe, but I had to learn a whole new idea of church. Though I understood the rationale for church school and worship happening at the same time, and these decisions were made in good faith for legitimate reasons, I was still saddened every Sunday as I watched little people, and the not so little, scurry off to their class. I always felt a bit bereft in my pew and worship always felt a little less for me on the days when this happened.

As years went by, I would return to my childhood church, growing smaller in number, but still a spectrum of the ages. I would find delight in how everyone's purse and pocket became the worship bags for the small group of little people who came each Sunday. Margaret Bud would have treats, Sara would have the mission challenge, Peggy would have books, Papa would have the pen and I found myself packing something to take with me too, a Bible Puzzle, crayons, or some cool new resource. Worship may not have had as many people or the music might not have been as grand, but the sound of little ones praying beside me or singing the lines of a repetitive hymn in true Mr. Bean style were essential to my own soul.

My own conviction for all ages worshipping together was affirmed one Sunday this past summer. I had a rare Sunday off from my Synod duties. The truth was I wanted to take the day completely off and not do anything, including worship. But I was compelled. I decided to attend another congregation, intending to slip in and slip out without anyone noticing. The announcements were made and the invitation to worship was being offered when I 'slipped in'. I sat in the pew, alone, but not for long. A young, outgoing little boy named Ryan, came and sat with me.

"Why are you here?"

"I came to worship."

"Good"

And so began a service I will never forget. I cannot remember (if I ever heard) the scripture or the sermon. I know the hymns we sang as I whispered the words to Ryan so he could do the singing. I know the offering was taken for Ryan and I looked through my wallet for money to place in it. I coloured a picture (given by the minister at the Children's time) and I made paper boats out of my bulletin and a few others Ryan found in the vestry. Our pew was a busy pew, for there just being two of us.

As the minister was offering the Benediction, I received my own personal blessing. Ryan looked at me and said, "I sure hope you will come to church next Sunday." I went home that day, lighter and blessed. The hospitality and friendship of this little boy was the presence of Christ that compelled me to that church that day.

This past Sunday, I returned to this church. I arrived earlier this day and because it was a special service, the church was more full. Ryan was there. When everyone was seated and the minister ready to speak, Ryan looked out the window and saw someone else coming. He got up from his seat, ran to the door and shouted, "Hi. We are waiting for you. We will not start without you." We did wait. And we worshipped with joy. Somehow, that call to worship set the tone.

I do not know what the complete answer to vibrant, authentic faith is. But I do know, that for me, the journey began, as a child, in worship. And today, it continues, when I go to worship and a child is there.

NON-PROFIT HOUSING

by Diana Bond

It has been about five years since I have been involved in Daybreak Non-Profit Housing, based in Ottawa. In a spiritual pant to better understand the faith I professed, the God I exalted, and the Christ I encountered, I found myself looking to become more involved as part of the church in the world; more involved in Christ's commission to reach out and tend to neighbours in need. With little idea as to how that would transpire, I chose, almost arbitrarily, an outreach out of my own church, St Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Ottawa: Daybreak Non-Profit Housing. I chose it for the simple reason that one of the Daybreak homes is located literally in my neighbourhood and, therefore, was undeniably 'neighbour'.

Working with this organization has been an educational and spiritual journey. Daybreak Housing is a non-profit organization that had its beginnings in compassion. In 1980, the Rev. Bob Percival, serving at the time in Bell Street United Church in Ottawa, encountered increasing numbers of people coming to him leading lives of desperation and in financial need. His concern led to the organization of a group from seven downtown Ottawa churches, which, through grace and compassion, led to the establishment of Daybreak Non-Profit Shelter (Ecumenical) Corporation in 1982.

Daybreak was one of the first non-profit organizations in Ottawa to provide a long-term option of independent, supportive, rent-geared-to-income housing for single adults living in poverty. From the outset, the houses were envisioned by the founders to be places where residents would find "home" and not merely shelter—a place for safe, comfortable, and affordable housing with the name "Daybreak" signifying a new beginning in life.

In 1983, with funding from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Daybreak opened its first home. Since then, four additional homes have been added to the organization and Daybreak now accommodates 46 residents, both men and women, who for varying reasons have had difficulty finding affordable housing. Currently, there are two homes for women and three for men. Many of the residents have struggled with issues of mental health, addictions, abusive relationships, and limited life skills, while others have found themselves suddenly plunged from security to insecurity from job loss or from the struggle to maintain the status quo in a world where utility bills skyrocket, rents increase, and food prices rise without a parallel increase in income.

I entered this world of the vulnerably housed/homeless population as a naïve and uninformed citizen, oblivious to the number of people in my own community, who struggle day to day to feed and shelter themselves. Gratefully, I was able to become educated within the grace and hope-filled bubble that is Daybreak.

Situations that may be perceived as hopeless instead have been verified, by stories and experiences, to have outcomes of hope. Daybreak's motto is 'Rebuilding Lives, Inspiring Hope' and I have over these past five years seen that byline become reality—lives rebuilt and moved on toward productive, independent living.

What makes it a reality?

Certainly a roof over one's head. But a roof alone is not enough to inspire hope. Daybreak offers, through its small staff and devoted volunteer base, ongoing support to its residents. Daybreak offers a Tenant Support Worker, who visits the homes twice weekly (at a minimum) to offer personal support, regular house meetings, and community building within the homes; and a small staff, who work hard to keep the homes maintained in pristine order, and comfortably furnished. It offers homes that are purposefully located in residential communities, conveniently close to amenities and services.

But there is more. Staff provides help by teaching life skills: working with residents on home maintenance, chores, grocery shopping, budgeting, job searching, and conflict resolution. They offer a 24-hour, on-call emergency system. As well, they advocate for more appropriate help when the resident requires greater support than Daybreak can offer. Over 95% of the residents have no family support and Daybreak staff and volunteers become not only their support, but also a source of caring security. Volunteers dedicate numerous hours serving this community by giving time to Board Governance and Committee work, and developing personal relationships within the homes. These are people who care about people.

This caring is exemplified through Daybreak's Annual BBQ, Christmas party and church service, quarterly Board dinners, gardening group, and birthday cakes for each resident's birthday. Furthermore, volunteers fundraise tirelessly and advocate for residents to bridge the gap between the 80% of funding that is received by the Government, and the missing 20% (approximately $2,000 per resident per year) that is required to maintain the support necessary to keep them safely housed in these community-oriented homes. Needless to say, fundraising and advocating for this initiative is a constant necessity.

My hunger to serve has been fed in the community of Daybreak by the knowledge that God has been faithful in providing for the needs of Daybreak. The compassion continues. The community that started Daybreak, and in many capacities still supports Daybreak, speaks to the world that faith, hope, and love can transform.

My church, St Andrews Presbyterian, has a core group, who has adopted one of the homes and makes regular monthly visits to share meals, play games, facilitate outings, provide conversation, and offer friendship. As part of this group, I have witnessed cautious, reserved, broken individuals reach out. Smiles, conversation, anticipation, requests for additional opportunity, requests for support, questions of faith or life issues, tears, hugs and gratitude have all been part of the experience. Life stories, struggles, and the dawning of possible hope … the 'daybreak' of restoration has brought that same hope into my own life. That same dawning of certain hope that God lives through each of us and for each of us. When Jesus tells us, "I am waiting for you. I am preparing a house for you and there are many rooms in my house," perhaps it is not just mansions in the sky, but real hope also here and now, where human need is felt.

By the grace of God, the originators of Daybreak saw a need, and within the past 30 years, hundreds of residents have benefited and moved forward in hope to independent living. Their hope becomes ours. There is room for anger at injustice and argument for basic human rights, such as housing and food security, but there is no room for cynicism. God came to us in compassion as a human to serve our human needs. When we do likewise, in our communities, and act on his command to love one another, untold miracles occur both around us and in us. Love endures. Love cannot remain uninvolved because God is love. His love and mercy, as the Bible and the faithful portend, endures forever.

May we remember and continue to do our part beginning each and every daybreak, knowing the difference it can make to our fellow beings, to us, and in our relationship with God. I have been blessed on this journey involving Daybreak and share it with hope and in thanks.

Diana Bond is a member of St Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Ottawa, a wife and mother of three, a nurse in the Ottawa Heart Institute, and a Board Member of Daybreak Non-Profit Housing Ottawa.

Children in Poverty in Canada

Housing

by Rev. Helen Smith

Mission Study

This is the third of four mission studies looking at Children in Poverty in Canada. The study includes the following sub-topics:

- **Becoming Aware of the Canadian Situation** in the July–August 2012 edition
- **Food Security** in the September–October 2012 edition
- **Education** in the May–June 2013 edition

Opening Reflection

We who are homeless believe in God; the one who created and blessed all people in God's image. In God we are all sisters and brothers. We affirm God is a loving and forgiving God, not a condemning God. So we believe no one should be mistreated as inferior or unworthy. So we believe God abandons no one. We believe God accepts everyone. We believe Jesus Christ was himself abused, ignored, challenged and taunted. So we believe Jesus knows our pain and suffering. Jesus stands by our side. Jesus will raise us above our suffering and despair. We believe God created all people to be in community. So whether it be church or the shelter crowd, we believe in communities that practise love and forgiveness, mercy, and peace.

Adapted from a statement authored by the Rev. Jean Kim, retired minister, PCUSA, and founder of the Church of Mary Magdalene, a diverse Christian community of homeless and formerly homeless women, in Seattle, Washington.

Biblical Reflection

Isaiah 58 was written at the time of rebuilding in Jerusalem after the remnant returned from Babylonian exile. It represents the classical understanding of God that grew out of the Exodus: God liberates from bondage, provides food in the wilderness, and gives a homeland. To be true to God is to be on the side of those who suffer injustice, those denied their fair share of the world's produce, and those denied housing and community. This passage deals with some of the religious observances of one of the groups, who had returned from exile. Read Isaiah 58.the orphan, like the widow, had no security. The biblical phrase "widows and orphans" could be replaced today with "children or families in poverty."

- In what ways did the people addressed here seem to be following God's ways? (v. 2)
- What was the result? What were the people complaining about? (v. 3)
- How would you describe the worship observances of these people?
- What is involved in the fast that God chooses? (vs. 6, 7, 9, 10, and 13)
- What will be the result of that fast? (vs. 8, 9–12, and 14)

In 2 Kings 4:8–10, we read of how a Shunemite woman provided shelter for Elisha. In Luke 9:58 Jesus refers to his own homelessness. Read Luke 8:1–3, Matthew 27:55, Mark 15:41. Who may have provided housing for him?

- How can we bring the homeless poor into our homes today? (v. 7)

Homelessness does not discriminate.

Housing First

Traditionally, people experiencing homelessness were expected to address their issues, such as mental illness or addictions, which led to their homelessness, before they were housed. Housing First is a relatively new concept. The priority is to move people experiencing homelessness into appropriate housing first, and then, from the stability and safety of a home, begin to work with them by providing support on dealing with the issues that contributed to their homelessness. Housing First respects client choice, follows a harm reduction approach, and sees housing as a basic right. People experiencing long-term homelessness tend to resort to government-funded systems, such as the courts, jails, hospitals, and emergency shelters much more frequently than people who have housing. Research demonstrates that it costs less to provide appropriate housing and support to a person at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness than to provide the same person with short-term and ongoing emergency and institutional responses. Most studies indicate those with the highest needs incur system costs of $100,000 or more per year. This is two to three times higher than the cost of providing housing with supports.[i]

- How will Housing First “repair breaches and restore streets to live in?”

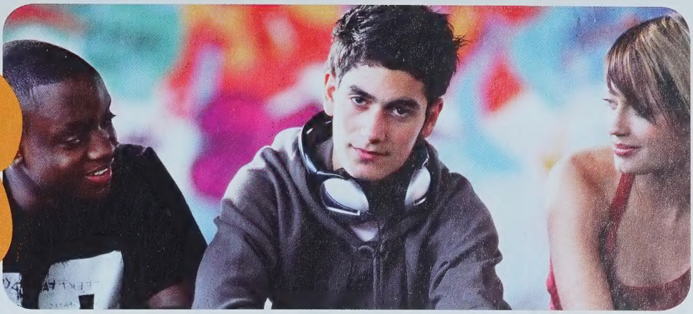
Sing or read:
#722, Lord, whose love
(Book of Praise)

The reality for children living in poverty in Canada

While statistics are hard to come by, in 2008, it was estimated that there were 22,500 children in Canada who were homeless[ii] Agencies involved with people who are homeless, including those that attempt to count the number of people who are homeless, agree that one of the fastest

A Case Study: A Place to Call Home: Acadia Place, KAIROS Calgary

In 2007, KAIROS Calgary, an ecumenical group made up of ten Christian denominations concerned with putting faith into action, sponsored a workshop with Dermott Baldwin, then CEO of the Calgary Drop-In and Rehabilitation Centre. Baldwin challenged the churches to go beyond providing beds in their



growing segments of the homeless population is families with children. For some brief snapshots across the country: In 2012, Halifax had 1,700 families on their waiting list for social housing.[iii] In August, 2009, Toronto had 70,174 families on the waiting list for social housing.[iv] Calgary social housing (Calgary Housing Company) does not publicize their waiting list, but between 2009 and 2011, 570 unique families used the two family shelters in the city.[v] Vancouver's 2011 homeless count revealed 56 homeless families.[vi] Neither of these latter two statistics includes the hidden homeless, in cars, trailers or friend's basements, so the numbers could be significantly higher, especially as parents who are known to be homeless risk having their children put in care.

basements once or twice a month for families who were homeless, by getting involved with providing permanent housing for these families.

KAIROS Calgary took up the Baldwin Challenge and the KAIROS Working Group on Homelessness and Affordable Housing was born. For two years, they met and tried to come up with a strategy. Nothing seemed to be working. No one had particular skills for managing housing projects and everything they looked at was way beyond their pocket books. Then in 2009, the Calgary Homeless Foundation suggested a partnership. They had the expertise and a housing complex in mind. KAIROS could open the doors to the resources of the faith community. Provincial and city governments were concerned about homeless families and $6 million in funding from the provincial and municipal governments sealed the deal.

Acadia Place, a 58-unit affordable housing complex was purchased for $9 million. The complex is close to employment opportunities, transit, shopping and services, schools, and community centres. The churches' role is twofold: to help pay down the $3 million mortgage so that the rents can be maintained at an affordable level and the project continues to be sustainable, and to provide volunteer support. Volunteer support so far

has included: building a playground, working with the tenants at Spring and Fall clean ups, helping with a community garden, and special events like a Christmas party and Canada Day party. In the future, the churches hope to be able to help with ESL programs, homework clubs, and transportation.

To Think About:

- What were some of the stumbling blocks KAIROS Calgary ran into?
- This project worked originally because of partnership—

Jen's Story

Up to Grade 3, Jen's life was good. Then her dad became mentally ill with chronic depression. They had to move and her dad left. Jen blamed her mom. Her mom started drinking. By the 6th grade, Jen was out of control—stealing, lying, and defying. She moved from her mom's place to her uncle's, then to her dad's. Nobody could handle her. She ran away and in downtown she found a community that accepted her, that looked out for her, that was nice to this 12-year-old, that gave her food and a warm bar to hang out in, that exploited her, and got her high. At 14, she was a crack-addicted prostitute. When she didn't turn all her money over, her boyfriend threatened to kill her and she ran to her dad, who turned her in. She thought at the time that that was the most horrific thing he could do, but it saved her life. In the Young Offenders Centre, coming down off the drugs, she made a promise to herself. No more hard drugs and no more prostitution.

Instead, when she got out, she bought a gun so she could earn her living as an armed robber. The gun gave her the respect she didn't get as a prostitute.

At age 16, she was sentenced to 18 months for armed robbery, which stretched to six years as she would run away when she was out on a day pass. On September 11, 1996, while she was in jail for robbery, a friend hung himself in jail. He gave up. Jen made a decision that day that she wasn't going to be partnership with the churches, a foundation, and government. It continues to work today in partnerships, including the Foundation (owner of the complex), the tenants, and the churches. What partnerships would work to provide housing for families, who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in your community?

- What do you see as some of the advantages of the volunteer component for the tenants? The churches? The Foundation?

"a victim of the system." Jen moved to BC with her boyfriend. He was a small time dealer, in debt to the dealers over him. Eventually he lost his mind through abusive drug use. Jen went in with the dealers to get the money to pay off his debt. She got caught and shipped back to Alberta.

Now 23, Jen has a new partner, Carlos. They live in the suburbs. She is pregnant with twins. Jen is clean and sober, and the money is coming in. Everyday Carlos goes downtown to his 'office' to work. He is a crack dealer. One summer night, Carlos dies from an overdose of heroin. In his pocket there is $4,000, some crack, and his cell phone. Carlos was an immigrant who had not been in the country long. Jen is not eligible for widow's or orphan's benefits for her twin boys. Welfare turns her down, saying she is employable. Her appeal takes eight months, during which she is hospitalized for a hysterectomy. Eventually she does get a job, which pays $16 an hour. A caregiver for one of her sons, who is autistic, costs about $19 an hour. Jen turns on Carlos' phone and starts selling. She is arrested and pleads guilty.

She was guilty and she didn't want to waste public money. Her children stayed with relatives for eight months and then were placed in a foster home. She was allowed a 30-minute call each week. By this time, Jen's mom had died, but her dad, though still fragile, visited her twice a week.

On July 2, 2010, she is out and spending 30 days in a half-way house. During this time, in order to get her children back, she must find a place to live, have an income, and meet parole conditions, such as counselling, in-home support, and visits to a probation officer. With all the appointments to be kept, there is little time to search for a home or a job, but Jen does it all.

She finds work as a peer researcher with Inside Out, a University of Calgary research project with women who have been incarcerated, looking at where the gaps are, at what women coming out of prison need to know, and what the community needs to know. She is helping to write a resource manual on change through women's voices. With help from local agencies, she is directed to Acadia Place, which has a two-bedroom apartment available on the ground floor. The playground is right there, schools are close, and the community support worker provides programs like the homework club for her children. The rent is 30% of her income. Jen's children are returned to her just before Halloween.

On the day that I visited Jen, she is working from home. Her children are in school. One is a football star, the other deep into video games. She has lived at Acadia Place for two years. "Housing is the key," Jen says. "I couldn't make it without the subsidized housing." On the walls of the apartment I see two plaques with bronzed baby feet, school pictures of two boys, a medal made out of foil for "Best Cheerer," and a homemade card for Mother's day: "Marvelous Openhearted Mindful. I love you mom."

To Think About:

- What did Jen find in the downtown community? Would she have found some of the positive aspects at your church?
- What are some of the factors that led to Jen turning her life around?
- Light a candle and spend time in prayer for Jen and her family.

Additional Resources/Activities:

1.Use the books, *Fly Away Home*, by Eve Bunting, Clarion Books, New York, 1991, and *Someplace to Go*, by Maria Testa, General Publishing Ltd, Toronto, 1996, to open up a conversation with children about children who are homeless.

2. Sky Works Charitable Foundation has produced three excellent documentary films: Home Safe Calgary, Home Safe Hamilton, Home Safe Toronto, focussing on children and families who experience poverty and homelessness.

3.Two books on homelessness in Canada: *On the Street: How we created the Homeless*, Barbara Murphy, J. Gordon Shillingford Publishing Inc, 2000, and *Homelessness: How to End the National Crisis*, Jack Layton, Penguin Canada, 2008.

Closing Prayer

Sheltering God, under your wings there is room enough for everyone. We pray for families who live crowded into shanties with paper-thin walls, corrugated iron roofs, no clean water, no electricity, no hope.

We pray for families where members must live apart because there is no place for them to be together, for parents in shelters, and children in care.

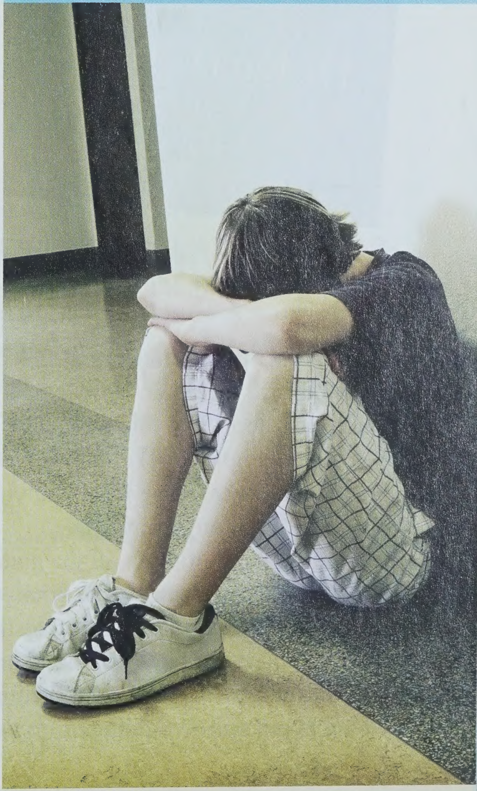
We pray for families who are squeezed into one inadequate room; for families living in motels, or moving from church basement to church basement each night.

Gather us all, O God, under your wings. Teach us your ways. May we who have homes find the courage, love, and compassion to reach out to those who are without homes. May we who are homeless find homes where we can live in dignity, comfort, and security.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

> Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.
>
> Hebrews 13:2 (NRSV)

> "Each one of them is Jesus in disguise."
>
> ~ Mother Teresa



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[i] 2007 RSM Richter Inc. Study on Cost of Homelessness in Calgary. Commissioned by Calgary Committee to End Homelessness. National Secretariat on Homelessness (2005) Study: The Cost of Homelessness: Alternate Responses in Four Canadian Cities (Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal and Halifax)

[ii] Skyworks Charitable Foundation, www.skyworksfoundation.org

[iii] Kelly Regan, MLA, Bedford-Birch Cove, Nova Scotia, www.cahhalifax.org/KellyReganHansard_Apr4_2012.pdf

[iv] *The Toronto Star*, September 7, 2009

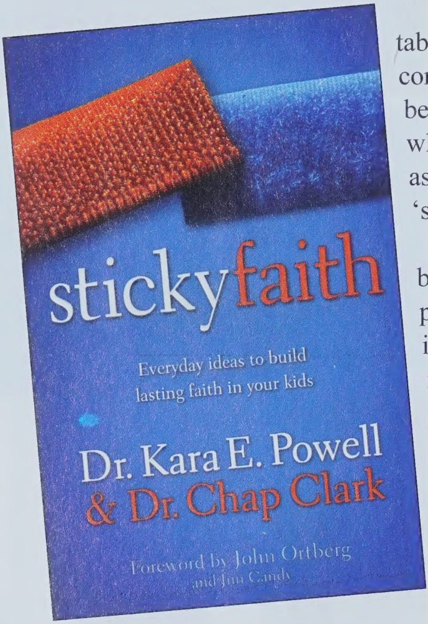
[v] Calgary Homeless Foundation, Preliminary Report: The State of Homelessness in Calgary in 2012

[vi] Metro Vancouver 2011 Homeless Count

Reviews

Sticky Faith, Everyday Ideas to Build Lasting Faith in Your Kids

by Kara E. Powell and Chap Clark


stickyfaith
Everyday ideas to build lasting faith in your kids
Dr. Kara E. Powell
& Dr. Chap Clark
Foreword by John Ortberg and Jim Candy

As a mom, this book lives on my bedside table. I pray nightly that my children will continue to grow in their love of God and become lifelong disciples of Jesus. I pray that what we demonstrate and teach about our faith as parents and that what the church offers will 'stick'.

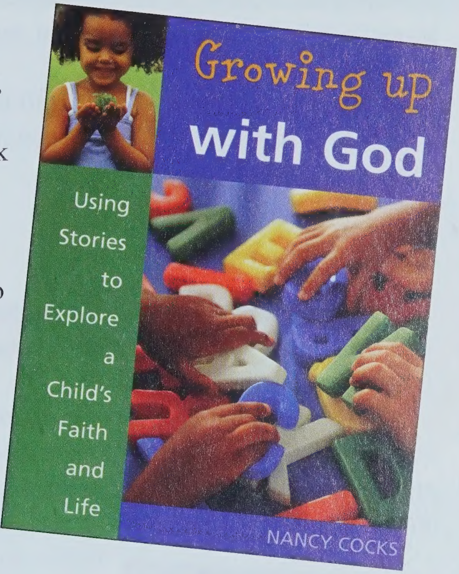
This book is a great addition to the bedside table of any parent. Although it provides good sound research, it is presented in a way that is accessible to all. This research helps to lead parents into the practical ideas that follow. It encourages parents to schedule time for meaningful conversations with their kids, and to be creative in this. It encourages us to model our relationship with God. It encourages us to talk about money, especially giving, with our children. The countless ideas may seem overwhelming, but many can be added seamlessly into our lives, and we don't have to embrace them all—every change can make a difference.

The other thing I like about this book are the quotes from youth and young adults that are included. Here is one from Ian regarding the church, "So, it was kind of ... I don't like this word, but for lack of a better one, segregated, in the sense of the high school students have their thing and then the adults have their thing." And, here is one from Robyn, "My parents are probably the biggest influence out of anybody."

Finally, in addition to all the great ideas in this book, we are reminded to visit the sticky faith website, www.stickyfaith.org, for more resources.

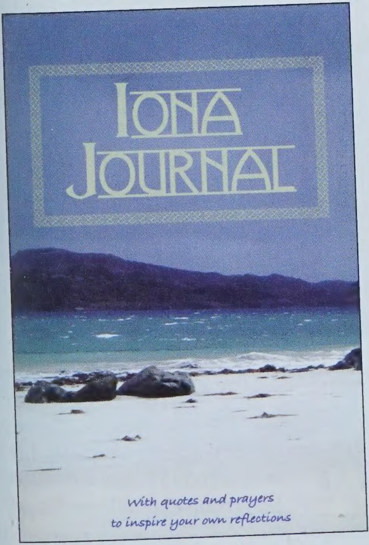
Each chapter also contains questions for reflection and discussion. It would be a great book for parents to read and discuss together. Alternatively, it would be great for a parent discussion group and a great way for us all to get used to talking about our own faith.

Growing Up With God
by Nancy Cock



When I picked this book off the shelf, I had no idea what a great resource I had found! I thought it would be another book that looks at how to pass along our faith to our children—this time focusing on storytelling. It is, but it does much more than talk about it. It gives you the tools to do it! Rev. Nancy Cock, a Presbyterian minister, came up with this great project called, *The Story Project*. She gathered volunteers from across Christian traditions, and across Canada, to use a collection of stories she had written with their children. She says, "This book is the result."

Although she does give some foundation for the act of storytelling, conversation, and prayer with children, the best part of this book are the stories. Nancy shares her stories of Fergie the Frog, Sherman the Hound Dog, and Jackie Rabbit. Each story includes a short reflection on the story, ideas for talking about the story, and a prayer for after the story. The stories are short enough to use with a child in kindergarten, and a few are still available in picture book form if you prefer to purchase the picture book.



One word of caution, this book is out of print, so if you want a copy, contact The Book Room quickly as they only have a limited supply! Alternatively, check your church's library, or perhaps your minister's book shelf!

Iona Journal
from Wild Goose Publications

This is what it says it is—a journal. It is a lovely spiral bound journal and most of the pages are empty, some lined, some blank for your own reflections, or for pasting in your own pictures or mementos. A few pages have an inspirational quote on the top, such as “The power of love is greater than the love of power,” by George MacLeod, but the majority of the pages are for your reflections.

This would be a lovely hostess gift for a friend. It would also be perfect for you to share your nightly thoughts and prayers with God, or for your quiet time with God.

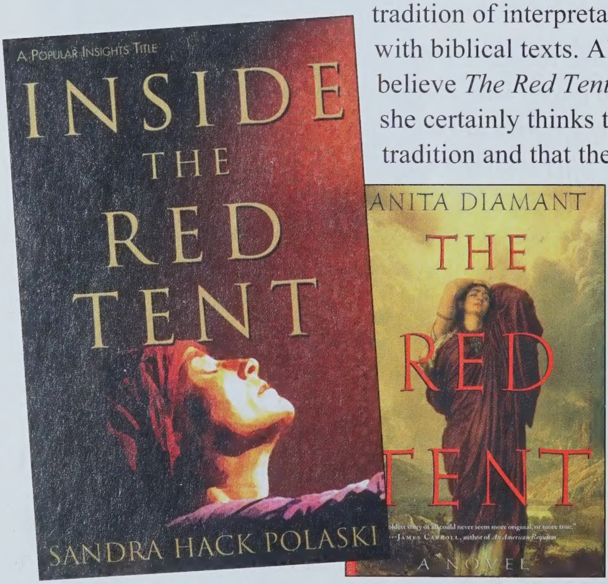
Inside the Red Tent

by Sandra Hack Polaski

I, like many, read and enjoyed the book, *The Red Tent*, by Anita Diamant. This is a ‘companion guide’ written by a New Testament Professor at Baptist Theological Seminary.

The introduction reads like a book review of *The Red Tent*, but also gives a little of the Biblical context. We are then led into a number of complex chapters associated with the book. The first two chapters have us consider Dinah. We are next involved in a discussion regarding midrash. Midrash is a long Jewish tradition of interpretation that consists of dialogue with biblical texts. Although Polaski does not believe *The Red Tent* should be labelled midrash, she certainly thinks that it is a part of this tradition and that the novel contains the biblical story, while making it relevant for today. Polaski also talks about the God connection in this novel.

This book is not light reading, but neither was the original novel. It would be good for a book club that wants to take several weeks for discussion on one book.



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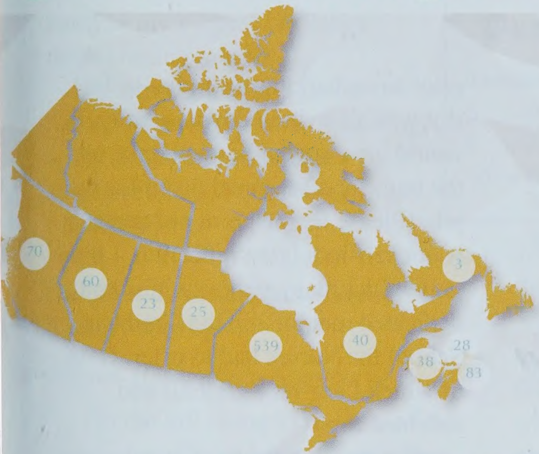

Gathering in
899
congregations
with
15
new church
developments

Worshipping in
20
languages

- Arabic
- Cantonese
- Cree
- English
- Efik
- Filipino
- French
- Ga
- Hindi
- Hungarian
- Ibo
- Korean
- Mandarin
- Ojibwe
- Portuguese
- Punjabi
- Spanish
- Taiwanese
- Twi
- Urdu

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22
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and

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28
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the world

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to reach out to others and
share the good news, in the
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Mission In Action

Michelle Verwey
India

Returning has a different feeling. Going has the fear and excitement of the unknown. Returning includes the fear and excitement of the known. And in India's case, the known includes knowing there is an endless spectrum of unpredictable unknowns.

In 2010, when I was going to Indore for the first time, the excitement of residing for a year in Madhya Pradesh's largest city had my viscera tingling. There was a moderate amount of certainty of what I was going to do at the Graduate School for Nurses. My contract of sorts stated I would teach community health nursing. What preoccupied my mind was whether I could do it and what was living in Indore going to be like.

Returning I am less concerned with the day-to-day living in Indore. The questions I want to get answered are more along the lines of, "Does the city bus still cost five rupees?" rather than "How will I get around?"

My viscera starts tingling again when I think of what I am going to be doing at the school and I wonder whether the challenge will be too great. Looking back at what I ended up doing in 2010–2011, compared to what I thought I was going to do, I would not have imagined it possible prior to embarking for India. In fact, if it was all written down initially, I would have stayed home to take up the hunt for a seasoned nurse for the job. (Please let me point out that this is not self-indulgent reflection. I brag only of the many opportunities and dedicated mentorship the Graduate School for Nurses had to offer. Both of which I am very grateful and indebted for.)

Anticipating the known unknown (that it will not turn out like the contract states) holds more meaning now than it did in 2010, when I was warned that might happen.

For this school year, *on paper* I will be:

- Working on establishing the library as a resource centre;
- Assisting with the training of staff on the use of e-library software and the computer lab;
- Supporting staff in finishing the Student Handbook and Specific Objectives of Learning curriculum resource;
- Enabling staff to acquire skills in certain areas that they have not yet had the opportunity to experience;
- Doing any other duties assigned by the Principal of M.I.B.E. (Mid India Board Education)
- Teaching at the Graduate School for Nurses in Indore.

That last bullet point may find itself as my biggest challenge these coming months.

Returning also brings the feeling of utter joy when reuniting with friends and colleagues. I am so pleased to be hours away from this feeling!

Overseas Staff Birthdays

January

5 – Aron Pandy-Szekeres, Hungary
6 – Anna Pandy-Szekeres, Hungary
10 – David Pandy-Szekeres, Hungary

David and Anna Pándy-Szekeres
Eastern Europe

Prayer-Hall built in Nagybereg

On the hill rising to the east of the commune of Nagybereg, from where in good weather one can see all the way to Munkács castle and where the visual horizon ends in the bluish crown of the Carpathian Mountains, on July 15, Hungarians, Gypsies/ Roma, Dutch, and Americans together praised the Lord for the newly completed Prayer-Hall.

It was 19 years ago that we teachers and students of the secondary school began to invite the members of the three-hundred-strong Gypsy/Roma enclave to Bible study sessions and religious instruction classes. It is with thanks to God that we remember the women, Emma and Erzsi, who long ago opened the door of their heart and their home to the scriptures.

It was 19 years ago that the students of the Nagybereg Reformed Church secondary school started going out to the Gypsy/Roma enclave every stay-in weekend to teach the children the Good News stories. From the autumn of 1998 to that of 2000, and then from 2008 onwards, under the supervision of David Pándy-Szekeres,

The new hall

Cutting the ribbon

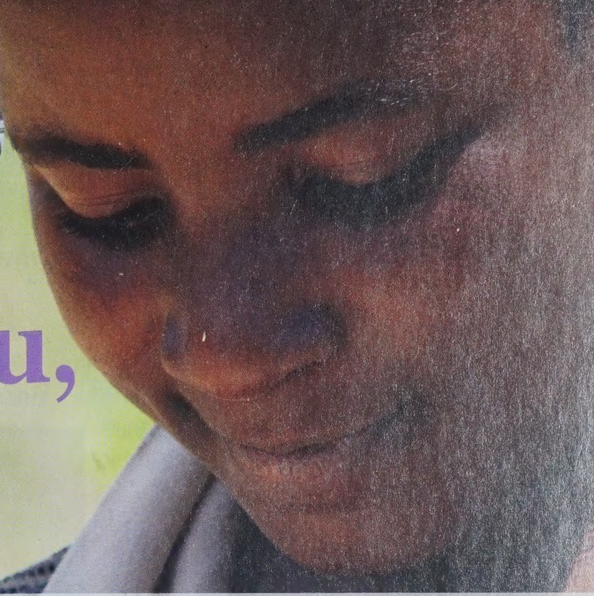
the missionary Ferenc Homoki and his wife Dianna have taken on the trying responsibilities of preaching, teaching Sunday school, school programs, and summer Bible vacation school for the benefit of our Gypsy/Roma brothers and sisters. The Sunday worship services were regularly held in István and Margit's small house or yard. Many felt the need for a Prayer-Hall.

"It has been very gratifying for me that the Lord charged me with the construction of the prayer-hall," said Ferenc, "and it was also very gratifying that, with the Lord's continuous providence, it was completed in one year."

Every year, significant advances are realized in the Gypsy/Roma enclave. These include the establishment of the playground, installing of the electrical energy supply network, building of the road, and construction of the Prayer-Hall.

Those providing assistance to Ferenc in the construction project included Zoltán Fancsik as construction supervisor (from the Reformed Church congregation of Nagybereg); David Pándy-Szekeres, missionary consultant; many men from the Gypsy/Roma congregation;

Praising God through song



Thank you, WMS!

Presbyterian World Service
& Development

hanks so much to our friends at WMS!

hrough your prayers and ongoing support in 2012, life-changing development and relief rograms have impacted thousands of men, women and children around the world. The WS&D team and our partners thank you for responding to God's call to share his love, re for those in need and serve the vulnerable.

members and supporters of the Gypsy Mission Foundation in the Netherlands; members of the Goes congregation in Zeeland; a Canadian-Korean youth group; and the unwaveringly loyal ladies, Irénke Gáncsos, Ildikó Fancsik, and Kati Tar who often served with the scripture teaching and the children's school teacher, Renáta Papp.

The scripture teaching is regularly held on Sunday for the congregation in the new Prayer-Hall and Catechism instruction has also been launched for those who sensed a desire for this in their heart. If God permits, a weekday kindergarten program for 4–6 year olds and a homework assistance program for school children will begin in September.

On this special day of celebration, a refreshing rain sprinkled the parched meadows of Nagybereg and God's finger drew a rainbow on the eastern sky. We pray that parched souls, the residents of the enclave, little ones and big ones, young ones and older ones may all find in this Prayer-Hall, now and in the years to come, refreshment, peace, and rebirth through Jesus Christ. This depends on us, also.

The WMS ... Did You Know?

Helping Women Build Better Lives

by Nandy Heule

Women's Missionary Society groups are active in many organizations and this is one of them.

Can you imagine starting your own shop if you lived in a poor country with very few jobs available?

This Fall, members of the St. Andrew's WMS in Kitchener, Ontario, had no problem coming up with great business ideas when an Oikocredit representative asked them to participate in some role playing.

Nandy Heule, from Oikocredit Canada Central, asked a small group of women, who were gathered with their friends at the church, "If you were offered a small loan to launch your own business in Guatemala, what would you do?"

One member said she would start baking and selling tortillas. Another imagined she would start knitting. Yet another would-be entrepreneur in the group wondered whether she could earn an income watching neighbourhood children. The list went on!

St. Andrew's WMS has been able to fulfill these types of dreams in the real world for many years. The society has been a faithful investor in Oikocredit. Their investments turn into small loans for women in 70 countries worldwide who seek to improve their lives.

Oikocredit is an international financial cooperative with members across Canada. Founded in 1975, this non-profit organization is rooted in the World Council of Churches. Its first investors were churches. Now many years later, thousands of investors in the cooperative reach 26 million clients by extending loans to micro-finance partners, fair trade, workers' cooperatives, and other groups. Over 80% of the clients are women.

The Presbyterian Church of Canada, congregations, and especially the Women's Missionary Society groups, hold Oikocredit investments, often for many years. These investors expect steady financial returns, as well as social returns.

In the Dominican Republic, Epedita, a young mother living in the capital city of Santo Domingo, is now a successful entrepreneur. She lost her job a few years ago after her employer discovered she was pregnant. (Many of our readers might remember how they were impacted in similar ways in Canada not too long ago!)

With the little money she received after she was let go, Epedita began a small grocery store in the front of her family's one-bedroom home in Santo Domingo. But with little merchandise to sell, her profits were low. Epedita and her husband Julio, a construction worker, were worried about supporting their growing family.

Enter Oikocredit. Epedita's decision to take out a loan from Oikocredit partner Centro Dominicano de Desarrollo wasn't easy. After much discussion with Julio, she applied for a $50 loan to buy more merchandise. Profits grew. Eventually, a second loan helped Epedita buy a second-hand freezer.

"A woman cannot sit down and wait until her husband provides her with everything. I am happy to say the business has developed very well," Epedita says. She dreams of opening a second store and building a larger house for the family.

Oikocredit is extremely thankful for the support it receives from WMS groups across Canada. If you want to learn more about Oikocredit, you can visit www.oikocredit.ca or call our office at 647-350-0442.

Nandy Heule is Director of Investor Relations for Oikocredit Canada Central.

Nancy Heule and Josie Tinbolt

WMS COUNCIL EXECUTIVE

by Colleen Wood

The WMS Council Executive met in Toronto on November 9–10. Amidst diminishing funds, the council was looking forward, but also having to make some challenging decisions for today. One area where the WMS will be reducing costs will be in the material they send from the office. They will cut back on the number of Annual Reports that are printed and distributed, and also reduce the newsletter to once a year. However, you will be encouraged to stay informed by visiting the WMS website for current information, and if you require a print resource, you have just to request it.

Also due to diminished funds, it was deemed necessary to raise the subscription cost of *Glad Tidings* beginning in 2014. In 2014, the subscription cost for *Glad Tidings* will be increased to 15.50 (+applicable taxes). We do feel value has been added the past year with the inclusion of the study, which will continue. The 2013–2014 study will be on maternal health.

In ongoing work, the task force that has been entrusted to envision the future of the WMS has been working hard. They have read and been inspired by the book, *Twelve Dynamic Shifts for Transforming Your Church* by E. Stanley Ott. They have looked at the current work done by the WMS, Presbyterians Sharing, and Presbyterian World Service and Development to see where they dissect, and where they are unique. They have also taken into account, countless conversations with WMS members, and evaluations from The Women's Gathering. They will be sending recommendations to the May Council meeting at Crieff that they hope will honour past and current WMS groups, but will also allow for the continuation of The Women's Gathering, and the formation of new groups that will not fall under the current WMS structures.

The May Council meeting will be held with an exciting theme—Celebrate: Past, Present, Future.

Please keep the WMS Council in your prayers as they make important decisions for the regular and future work of the WMS!

Do Not Turn Them Away

by Colleen Wood

Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me. *Mark 9:37 (NRSV)*

Sometimes we think it takes a large effort, and a lot of money, to make our congregations more welcoming to children and families. Starting new ministries does indeed take planning and money. But, that is not the only way to make your congregation more welcoming to children and families. In reality, each of us can make a difference and we can start this Sunday! Here are a few ideas to get you started:

1. Talk to the children and youth in your congregation. Learn their names. Smile at them and ask them something about their week. The more you speak to them, the easier this will get.
2. Be willing to sit close to a family with young children and offer smiles to the children and parents. I have heard countless heart breaking stories of families with young children receiving criticism for their children's behaviour. Some of those families have left those congregations and never returned to any church. A few words of support for a family goes a long way! Even consider putting a few crayons and a small pad of paper into your pocket that you can share with a child.
3. Volunteer to assist with children's ministry in your church. You don't need to be a parent to volunteer. This also has benefits—as you share your faith, you will grow and be blessed.
4. Advocate for families. Ask if the Sunday School has sufficient funding? Ask families what they need to help nurture their children's faith. Pass along article, such as this, to your minister or elder. Allow parents to bring their children to Bible studies or meetings—many children are happy to be brought along with a few small toys or activities to keep them occupied.
5. Next church potluck, bring something child friendly. Many children will devour plates of fresh fruit and vegetables. Simple casseroles, like macaroni and cheese, can appeal to little ones. How about a bowl of goldfish crackers? Add a plate of hot dogs to your luncheon menu. And, assist families at church meals. It is a challenge to stand in lines with young children, balancing plates of food. Consider offering families a front place in the line, and an assistant to get their food to their table.

Can your WMS group come up with more ideas? Talk about it. Implement it. Make a difference!

In the Society

Synodical

The **Synodical of Quebec & Eastern Ontario** met for the Fall Rally at St. Matthew's Presbyterian Church in Ingleside on October 13 with the theme, Our Way, God's Way. St. Matthew's minister, the Rev. Harold Kouwenburg, extended a warm welcome and Rosemary Rutley provided an interesting history of the church since its beginnings in 1858. St. Matthew's was built after the Seaway displaced three former Presbyterian churches. Joan Hilliard and Linda Gerry led the devotion, Walking in the Way.

The meeting was constituted by prayer and the hymn, Will you come and follow me, was sung. Various reports were given and highlights from Council were shared. An offering was taken for Maternal & Child Care in Malawi, followed by Christine Ball sharing an interesting Bible study on Discernment, using Acts 16:6–15.

After a tasty lunch, prepared by the ladies of the host church, uplifting gospel music was played and sung by 'The Three Guys' of Ingleside—Rev. Harold Kouwenburg, Murray Haines, and Iain McLeod. Catherine Blatch welcomed members of Seaway-Glengarry Presbytery. Then, Christine Ball showed a PowerPoint presentation on CY 2012 and challenged us to make ministry among youth our priority. The Rev. Glenn Inglis was our guest speaker. He spoke about his 17 years in Malawi with The Presbyterian Church in Canada. There is a lack of food, electricity, wells for clean water, and schools, as well as medical services in Malawi. In a country with a population of 14 million, one million are orphaned children. Glen and his wife Linda, worked with the underprivileged and vulnerable. In spite of the difficulties, the African people have a deep spirituality and are not afraid to show it.

After courtesies and announcements, the Rev. Harold Kouwenburg pronounced the Benediction.

-Vivian Young

Presbyterial

Maitland Presbyterial held their Fall Rally in Lucknow with the theme, Hand to Hand.

There was a warm time of fellowship with delicious desserts prepared by the Lucknow group. Mary Campbell and Lorraine Clugston gave an interesting talk on The Hands of Jesus taken from the book of Mark for our worship service. An Honourary Certificate was presented to Margaret Siertsema for her dedication to WMS.

Guest speakers were Cathy Reid and Lyn Hill from St. James Church, London. They gave a very interesting and enlightening presentation on their mission trip to Malawi, working at the Chipegawa School Centre near Blantyre. Many needed supplies were taken and lessons taught. They are planning on returning in May.

Lanark-Renfrew Presbyterial Fall Rally took place on September 22 in Westminster Presbyterian Church in Smiths Falls, ON. President Lois Patchell welcomed everyone and constituted the meeting with prayer. The theme was Bringing in the Sheaves. The meeting opened with singing of the hymn, For the fruits of all creation, followed by prayer, and the WMS motto. Joan Hilliard of Renfrew led the devotions which had been planned by Mary Lynn McConnachie. There are eight areas in which one can grow. They are: our family relationships, our relationship with God, our knowledge of the written word (Bible), living God's way of life, self-discipline, taking care of our bodies, wise use of time, and participation in evangelism and discipleship.

Crystle Mazurek of Brockville was our guest speaker. Crystle was born to missionary parents and spent her early life in India. She moved to Canada and became a high school teacher. At 40, Crystle returned to India and when she saw the impoverished villagers, she vowed to make a difference. Crystle developed social justice initiatives, including the India Poverty Relief Fund. Her motto is, 'Providing the fishing rod and not the fish'. Over the past 11 years, Crystle has divided her time between Canada and India. She has now educated over 400 students up to Grade 12, has 10 in college, and has opened 11 tailoring training centres for women, who are very appreciative of being able to sew and earn a living.

In closing, we sang several songs from our new books and Lois Patchell, Presbyterial President, closed the meeting with a Benediction.

-Vivian Young

Barrie Presbyterial sponsored A Day Apart on Oct 13 at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Orillia. The theme for the day was Spiritual Gifts: Discovery and Celebration through the Arts. Rebecca Jess and Chantal Jackson, from Cairn Camp, were the leaders for the day. The day began with silent prayer and meditation. Rebecca's message, The Clown of God, was based on 1 Corinthians 12:4–6, using our spiritual gifts in God's world. Chantal presented a liturgical dance accompanied by Rebecca on guitar.

Everyone participated in the get-acquainted activities before splitting into two groups for the morning workshops. One workshop group learned a liturgical dance under Chantal Jackson's leadership. At the day's end, they performed this dance for all of us to enjoy.

The second workshop was drama led by Rebecca Jess. A delicious hot lunch was prepared and served by the ladies of St. Andrew's, Orillia. The two afternoon workshops were Art:Calligraphy led by Chantal and Music with Rebecca.

This inspiring day concluded with the Rev. Karen Horst leading us in the celebration of communion.

-Jill Pardy

Bruce Grey Presbyterial held their Fall Rally on September 20 in Walkerton with the theme, Butterflies—the Journey of Becoming. There were butterflies of various sizes and colours throughout the sanctuary.

Rev. Dr. Fred Green and Elizabeth Wilson

After a warm welcome from Elizabeth Wilson, President, singing the hymn, This is the Day, got us off to a rousing start. Walkerton President, Ethel Collins, and the Rev. Jeremy Sanderson also welcomed us.

The Knox (Walkerton) choir then sang a few numbers from a cantata which they had performed called, Into All the World. A screen above the choir showed pictures of people from various countries of the world, as well as scenes from different parts of the world. It was most inspiring and uplifting.

A report was given of the Gladys Simms Children's Rally held at Burgoyne in May. Those in attendance thought it was a most worthwhile day, and the offering of almost $300 was sent to Hanneke Cost Budde, a missionary in Tanzania, to help with the needs of the many children who live with her.

On the theme, Eleanor Crabtree shared her life story, and how Jesus made a difference. We assembled in four groups, according to the colour of our name tag and each group searched for Bible verses containing one of the following words: change, grow, new life, maturing. Each person was given a butterfly and a piece of coloured material to make and write a verse on as a book mark. These were to be taken home for use in our bibles.

The afternoon session began with the singing of the hymn, In the Bulb there is a Flower.

Then, the Rev. Dr. Ted Green, shared his experiences from a trip to Malawi. He preached several times while in the Blantyre Synod of the Church of Central Africa (CCAP). He described the Malawians as being very polite, and taught us their greetings in Chichewa and shared some of the customs. He showed pictures of some of the women from the Women's Guild in their special uniform—all their skirts were the same.

Rev. Creen shared some of the work being done by CCAP, and many of the projects aided by PWS&D. He stressed they were being given a hand up, not a hand out. Malangi is a medical mission hospital in the Eastern part of Blantyre Synod which is run by the church, and there is also a school there. Other projects are children's feeding programs, water programs (bore well), and agricultural programs introducing new crops, such as cassava, sweet potato and peanuts.

After closing business, we were on our way home thanking God for a great day.

Sarnia Presbyterial held their Fall Rally in St. Andrew's, Strathroy on October 18 with 40 people in attendance. The Rev. Gwen Ament from St. Mary's was our guest speaker. She has worked in Saskatoon with the Native Circle Ministry and is quite passionate about it. She told us the history of this ministry and the beginnings under the Rev. Stuart Folster. It is a very welcoming group. During their Prayers of the People, they use a prayer stone. The person holding the stone prays for their concerns and the stone gets passed around the circle. They are a community of the inner city, and people who require food, clothing, and personal hygiene items receive them. Sometimes it feels like a band-aid solution, but we have to start somewhere.

President's Itinerary

January 23: Niagara Presbyterial Annual Meeting

February 23: East Toronto Presbyterial Meeting

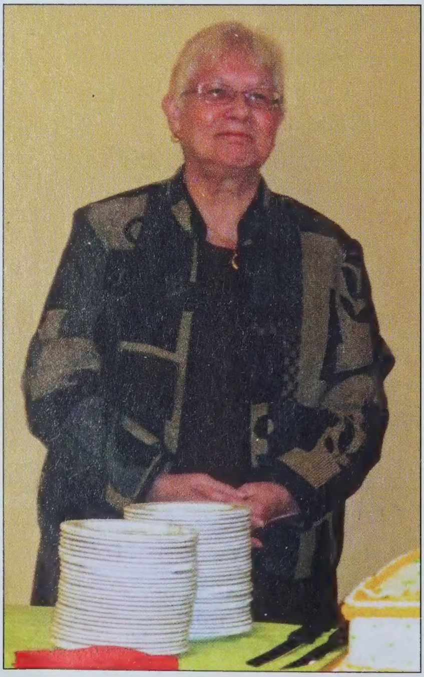
Closing devotions were from *Glad Tidings* magazine and we sang, Who's Gonna Tell the Story, You and I.

Brockville Presbyterial met for their Fall Rally at First Church, Brockville, on October 12. The Rev. Glenn Inglis was the guest speaker and since his retirement he has been talking to groups across Canada about his work and partnership with Blantyre Synod. After 17 years, he has had many personal insights into the infrastructure and hope of the most vulnerable and underprivileged people of this area. One of the challenges is that the country has over one million orphans, mainly due to AIDS. As well, because of the poverty, school usually occurs under a tree because of a lack of buildings; unprotected water is causing disease; and there is a shortage of money for medicine.

There are however some signs of hope. Improved conditions are happening under the Women's Guild of the Presbyterian Church and others. The church works to support family members and orphanages and feeds over 3,000 children daily! Financial training and self-help groups have increased financial independence. Agricultural programs with goats, fish, and farming, have all helped. As well, children's corners help children to talk about and deal with the death of family members.

Local

The WMS Goforth Group from St. Andrew's Church, Wingham, Ontario celebrated their 125th Anniversary in September. Pat Gaunt, Dianne English, Louise Bloemberg, accompanied by Catherine MacDonald, sang at the 100th Anniversary and again at the 125th. We give thanks to God for our past, rejoice in our present, and eagerly look forward to serving Him in the future.



Knox Oshawa, her home congregation, celebrated the retirement of the Rev. Dr. Lynda Reid with a celebration.

Remembering

Florence Drinkwalter
Friendship Auxiliary, St. Mary's ON

Margaret Duff
St. Andrew's Presbyterian, Mount Forest ON

Pearl Marks,
St. Andrew's WMS, Kitchener ON

Jean Fisk
Knox, Guelph ON

Maybelle Durkin
Sarah Dunning WMS, Knox, Dundas ON

Violet Archer
Campbell Afternoon Auxiliary, Knox, Woodstock

Helen Brisbin
WMS, St. Andrews Church, Guelph ON

Phyllis Scott
St. Andrews Presbyterian Women, Scarborough ON

Violet Miller
First Presbyterian, North Pelham ON

Building Has Begun

Building has begun on the Jobat hostel in India. Thanks to your generosity to this Together We Can! project, students from the Jobat Christian School will have a comfortable place to sleep. These children, who cannot return home each evening, after class, because of distances, have been sleeping in rundown, inadequate facilities. A group from the WMS will visit India in September 2013 for the official opening of the hostel.

Whoever said, "You can't have your cake and eat it too," never heard of Gift Annuities

Gift Annuities are a way you can make a gift to the church to support the ministry of your choice and in return receive a guaranteed annual income for life, the majority or all of the income tax-free. Sound too good to be true? Call the Planned Giving Office today to learn how you can have your cake and eat it too.

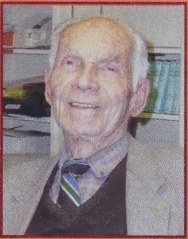
What flavour of ministry would you like to support?

A real life example:

Dr. Ron Bremner acquired a $30,000 single life gift annuity in July 1999 thru The PCC. For his gift, he received:

- A one-time tax receipt of $7,083
- Monthly payments of $165.17 (100% tax-free) for a total of $24,534
- AND $24,880 was left for PWS&D after he passed away in October 2011!

(The above example is for illustrative purposes only. Annuity rates and the residue available for disbursement vary.)



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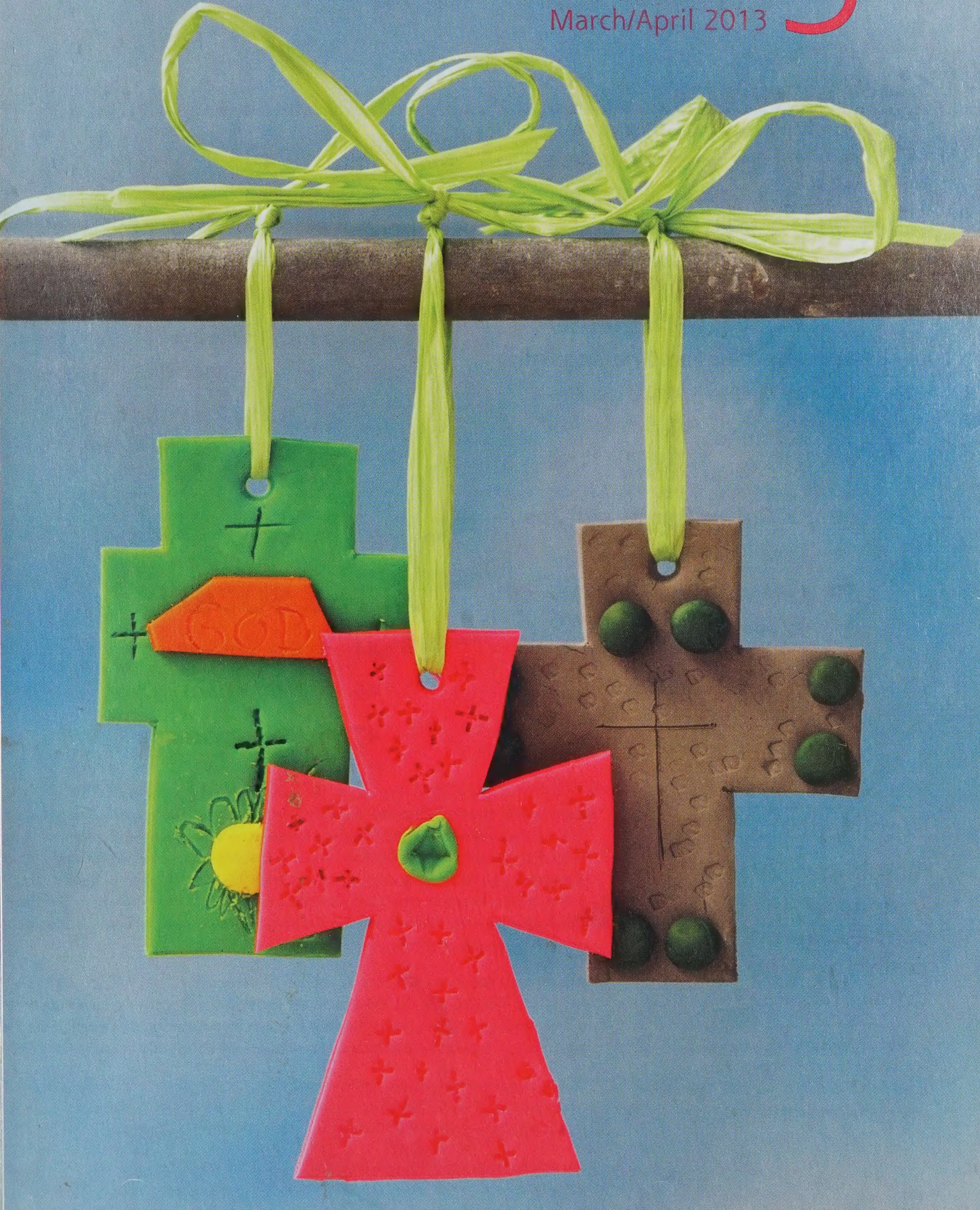

23 Easter Worship: Loved by God by Julia E. Apps Douglas

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End-of-Life Care

by Laura Hargrove

Palliative care, or end-of-life care, is different from traditional medical care for acute or chronic conditions. In the usual sense of medicine, the patient and the medical team are focussed on a cure for the complaint. In an end-of-life care situation, it has been acknowledged that a cure is not possible (the diagnosis is terminal), but there is still hope for healing in the form of a good death (as defined by the patient and their family). In other words, palliative care aims to address the physical, emotional, psychological, social, spiritual, and practical concerns of patients diagnosed with a life-threatening illness together with their families.

As a minister in the community, I have partnered with the palliative care team as a chaplain. Practically, this means I meet with the team for "rounds" twice a month for a few hours and we review each of the patients on our active and our stable lists. The team works to help those in our care to prepare for and manage the dying process, as well as assisting them with loss, grief, and bereavement. This includes personal care and symptom management, but also includes planning for changes in quality of life and how those challenges will be met.

Our team consists of the community care nurses, the palliative care physician, a pharmacist, the nursing team leader, a representative from the Hospice Society, and me as chaplain. Our community has a Hospice House with four beds to which patients can go to die if they are unable to be cared for at home. That house also has a lovely garden and patio—like a real home—and patients who are well enough can enjoy the outdoors when the weather cooperates. In addition, the Hospice Society has furnished one bed in our local hospital designated as the palliative bed there. Next to it, in the hospital, is the "family room," which is a relatively pleasant gathering place for those keeping vigil with the dying.

The Hospice Society has many well-trained volunteers who visit the dying in our community as a compliment to our palliative care team. Some hospice volunteers provide healing touch for stress management. Others do limited respite care so that family care givers can have a break, go to church, or take care of their own personal needs, such as medical appointments. The Hospice Society has also hired a part-time chaplain and a grief counsellor, who are available to all in the community who may need it. Many of these people are Christians, but the Hospice Society is a secular organization and so there is a fine line to be discerned between providing support and evangelization.

Most of the time, as team chaplain, I provide support to the team in a form of the ministry of presence: listening to their stories, making observations, asking questions (from a non-medical point of view), and sometimes answering questions. Of course, I am praying for each of the families and the workers on my own time.

Most of our patients have some kind of cancer, but others have diseases of the circulatory system (end stage cardiac failure or a respiratory problem like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) or something to do with their nervous system (ALS or Parkinson's disease). There are also other diseases like AIDS, end stage renal disease, or hepatitis. Some patients have more than one life-threatening condition. The one thing they all have in common is that they are all dying. Only patients with a limited life expectancy qualify for the palliative program.

Each province, and perhaps each region, will have different criteria and resources for their palliative care program. Being transferred to the care of a palliative team does not mean a patient leaves their family doctor or even that they might never see their oncologist again. Different training and different expertise are needed at different times in our lives. The oncologist is focussed on fighting the cancer. The palliative physician

is more focussed on keeping the patient comfortable and managing the symptoms. Not all general practitioners are aware of the latest advances in pain control or what is available to mediate side effects of certain drugs. The palliative physician specializes in these things.

In British Columbia, we have specifically defined Palliative Benefits, which are very beneficial to patients and their families. If someone you know has been recommended for palliative benefits, I would strongly recommend that they accept this. Being on the Palliative Benefits program often means a patient gets faster access to medication (this is especially important if someone's condition changes over a long weekend) as well as having access to a variety of assistive devices, including the use of hospital beds for the home. As well, Compassionate Care Benefits are part of Employment Insurance and are available across the country, allowing family members to take time away from work to be present with family members who are dying.

The main questions that I have been asked in my work as chaplain, have to do with religious festivals, fasting, and such things. Sometimes it's a matter of clarifying a misunderstanding. Sometimes a patient or family needs to reconnect with their faith tradition. They may seek reassurance for concerns about whether they will be welcomed back if they haven't been to church for years, but now need spiritual help. Once, after a patient refused pain medication saying, "My Lord suffered; so why shouldn't I?" the nurses and I had a very interesting discussion about redemptive suffering, sin, and the remedy for sin.

One thing that comes up over and over again has to do with lack of preparedness or planning for death. Each of our patients has received a terminal diagnosis and most have been told they will likely die within the next six months. Nevertheless, many resist writing their wills and do not want to discuss things like advance care planning, not to mention refusing to sign a "do not resuscitate" order. They are scared to think about their death and what happens afterwards to themselves and their loved ones.

My grandmother often told me that she did not "want to be kept alive by a machine." But she was not very specific. I presume she meant that she did not want to be on a heart-lung machine. But did that include kidney dialysis in the case of kidney failure? What about an insulin pump in the case she became a brittle diabetic? Or did she not want to be on oxygen in the case of respiratory distress? Advance care planning would have clarified this for my family.

The reality is that we all should make these preparations. I walk my dog twice a day and most mornings we cross the highway as part of our walk. I could get run over at any time. I might well receive a head injury making it impossible for me to speak for myself. Without these preparations, my family will have nothing to help them know my wishes.

None of us knows what tomorrow will bring. A health crisis may affect you or a family member at any time. You can begin with a conversation with your family doctor and find out what the options and terminology are in your province. Discuss it with your family. These discussions do not need to be disturbing. They may well lead to fruitful conversations about the meaning of life and death for you and the hope you have for eternal life.

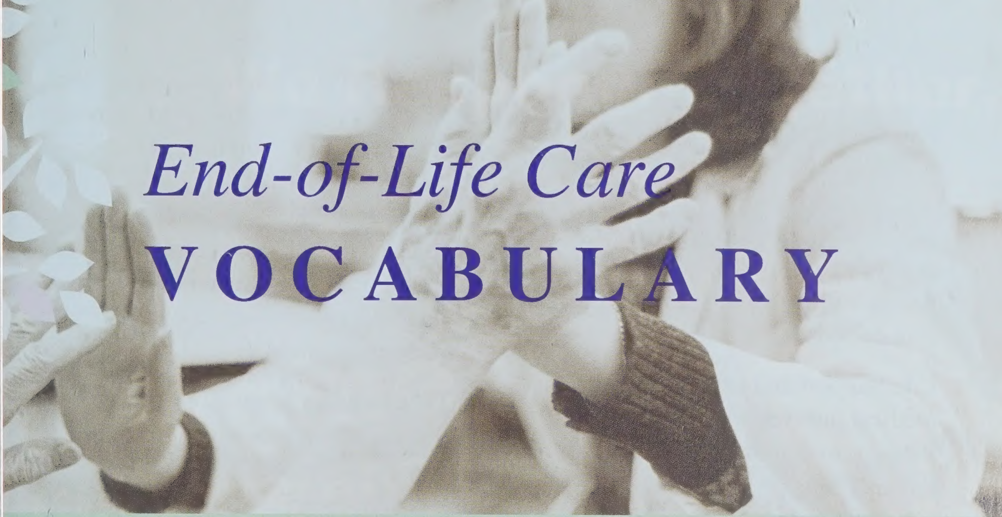
Laura Hargrove is Teaching Elder at Knox Presbyterian Church in Port Alberni, BC. As part of its service to the community, Knox makes its minister available as a community chaplain to the local Palliative Care Team.

NONE OF US KNOWS WHAT TOMORROW WILL BRING. A HEALTH CRISIS MAY AFFECT YOU OR A FAMILY MEMBER AT ANY TIME.

Where to start:

- The first step is to have the conversation with your family and doctor.
- Write your wishes down in an Advance Care Plan.
- Find resources to help you hold these conversations, prepare your advance care plan, and ensure the right people know your plans.

End-of-Life Care VOCABULARY



An advance care plan makes clear who can make your health care decisions for you. It outlines in advance what health care treatments you agree to, or refuse, including life support and life-prolonging medical interventions for certain conditions. It indicates preferences for residential care. This advance care plan could be changed at some later date. Many patients change their minds about meaningful quality of life as their condition changes.

An Advance Directive lets you state your decisions about accepting or refusing health care treatments directly to a health care provider. This must be followed if it is in place and no one will be asked to make a decision for you. Often care homes require an advance directive when a patient enters care.

A Do Not Resuscitate Order is a legal document on a legal form to respect the wishes of the patient to allow a natural death and not to undergo CPR if their heart were to stop or they were to stop breathing. DNR does not affect any other treatment—so for example: a patient would continue to get antibiotics or chemotherapy or other appropriate treatment. In the case of an expected death, it is helpful to have the DNR Order form prominently displayed on the fridge in the home. If someone calls 911, the first responders are required to provide any appropriate treatment including attempting CPR unless there is a clear DNR available.

End of Life Care is provided in the final stages of life. Care provided may also be called supportive care, palliative care, or symptom management. It addresses physical, psychological, and spiritual concerns. The focus is on comfort, respect for decisions, and support for the family.

An Enduring Power of Attorney allows you to appoint someone to make financial and legal decisions on your behalf if you become incapable. It is also possible to name someone in a temporary capacity.

Health care treatment is anything done for health care purposes including diagnosis, treatment, prevention, or symptom management. It might include getting a flu shot, taking your blood pressure pills, having surgery, or taking care of bedsores.

Life Support and life-prolonging medical interventions including tube feeding, hydration, breathing machines, kidney dialysis, medications, and CPR. These are medically appropriate when the goal of care is to prolong life.

A natural death is when the patient receives symptom management for pain and shortness of breath as death approaches, but not many other interventions.

Personal Care refers to the needs of daily living including diet, clothing, personal hygiene, exercise, and safety.

A Representation Agreement allows you to name a person to make routine financial decisions, personal care decisions, and some health care decisions. An Enhanced Representative Agreement allows you to name a person to make the decision to accept or refuse life support, or other life-prolonging medical interventions for you.

A Temporary Substitute Decision Maker is chosen by a health care provider if you have not legally named a representative to make health care decisions for you when you are not capable to do it for yourself. In BC, provincial law determines who can be on the list and in what order they may be approached. You may not change the order of the list. Thus, if you have strong feelings about who makes decisions when you are unable to do so, it is best to have set up representative agreements and enduring powers of attorney in advance.

Tube Feeding is a way of making sure someone gets nutrition when they cannot take food by mouth. The tube may be temporary or permanent. Liquid food may be giving through the person's nose or into their stomach through the abdominal wall.

A Will is a legal document indicating your wishes regarding the disposition of your assets after your death. It is helpful to indicate to your loved ones who helped you draw it up (usually your lawyer) and where a copy of the will is kept. The will names your executor who will make decisions regarding the estate after your death including any details of the funeral not specified. The executor does not necessarily need to be the same person as someone you have appointed under an enduring power of attorney.

Most of this information comes from the Vancouver Island Heath Authority Advance Care planning document: www.viha.ca/advance_care_planning). It is only to be used as a rough guide, and should not be used as a substitute to obtaining proper medical or legal information.

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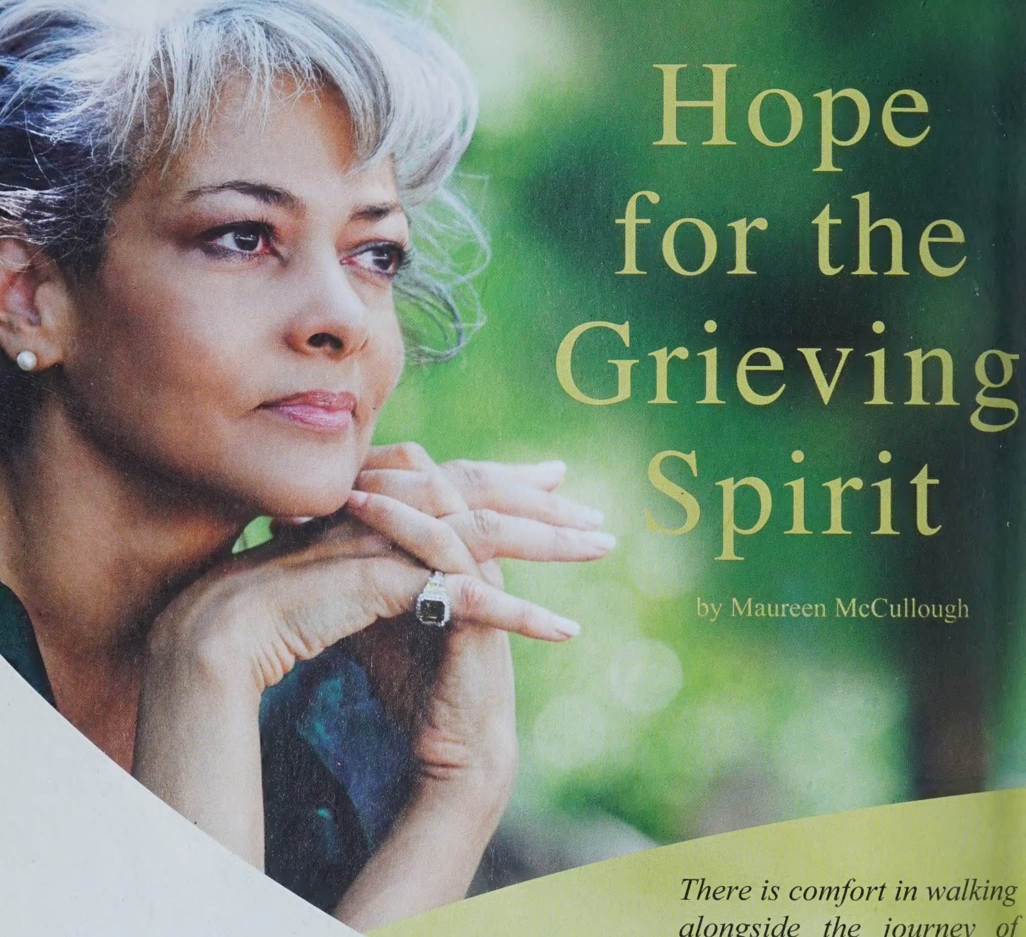

Hope for the Grieving Spirit

by Maureen McCullough

There is comfort in walking alongside the journey of another and understanding their pain and emotions that validate your own.

A number of years ago, the congregation at Bridlewood Presbyterian Church, in Toronto, was struck and saddened by a significant number of deaths, and especially the tragic loss of several of its younger members. As one who had survived such an experience in my own family, I felt God was laying a burden on my heart to minister to these grieving members. A renewed connection with an old friend opened the door for the HOPE Grief Support Group to begin at Bridlewood Church.

The idea for this type of group originated at a neighbouring church back in 1987, when Jean Daly and her husband suffered the loss of their daughter and son-in-law in a winter car accident. To help in her own grief journey, Jean and a few friends began this support group in 1991, inviting members of the community as well as the church. When Jean moved out west, my friend Mary Reid assumed the leadership of the program, and has been offering her very compassionate ministry at a variety of churches ever since. It was Mary who brought this program to Bridlewood.

HOPE stands for Helping Others through Pain and Grief Experiences. It is a six-week program, with each session lasting two hours. Participants begin by briefly getting to know each other, and learning about the 'seasons' of grief. The physical, emotional, and spiritual symptoms of grief are presented through PowerPoint and oral presentations, and suggestions for responding to and overcoming them are discussed. Handouts are provided at each session on such topics as overcoming depression, anger, guilt, suggestions to aid sleep, and journalling.

At three of the sessions, guests are invited to tell their story of their own grief experience. There is comfort in walking alongside the journey of another and understanding their pain and emotions that validate your own. It is here that one's Christian faith and the strength it provides are shared with the group. This gentle inclusion of the Christian perspective is intentional so as to respect those of other faiths who attend.

The group is encouraged by the attendance of a few interested church members who help with welcoming, refreshments, and facilitating discussions. If the group is large, it is divided up for more comfortable sharing during the last portion. Those who volunteer with HOPE, benefit greatly from learning how to sensitively listen and converse with anyone who is grieving, including 'what not to say'.

At Bridlewood, we have been enriched and strengthened as a community by reaching out to others. For me personally, in sharing and giving to others in their time of loss, my own suffering has not been in vain. I trust that others who have joined our HOPE group have experienced comfort and healing among us.

Maureen McCullough is a mother, grandmother, and piano teacher, and an elder, and organist at Bridlewood Church in Scarborough. Her own family tragedy happened in 1997.

A PAUSE

by Kristine O'Brien

Most pastors have reason to visit the hospital with fair regularity, but last week my visit was different. Wearing street clothes instead of a collar, I went to Credit Valley Hospital, in Mississauga, and found my way to Palliative Care. I quietly knocked on the door and found my friend Jennifer* leaning over the bed of her father. She was asking questions, watching for his responses, and making sure he was comfortable.

After a few quiet greetings to the family gathered around the bedside, we crept out to the lounge. I knew that after a week of being at the hospital day and night, Jennifer would be tired, and that as her beloved father lay dying, she would be filled with sorrow. So I simply listened as she talked about camping together at Algonquin this summer, her dad's quick decline, the hospital's excellent care. "It's surreal, isn't it?" I asked, remembering my own mother's death. "You know this day will come, but when it arrives it is nothing like you expected."

It may be nothing like we imagine, but those last days and moments can be a precious gift. They are filled with the strange contrast of holy mystery and everyday practicalities. The seconds tick by one at a time and yet hours seem to disappear in the blink of an eye. Blessed is the family that gathers together, that creates a room filled with peace. Blessed are the dying, who are surrounded with love as they journey from this world to the next. That's how it was for my friend and her dad.

I liked Jack*. He was a good man, a rock-solid father with a great sense of humour. He faithfully served the church all his life, adored his grandchildren, and shared such a deep friendship with his wife that even after fifty years, they still enjoyed each other's company immensely. He was a kind soul, and many will miss him when he's gone.

On my way out of the hospital later that afternoon, I was thinking about all of these things. Hospitals, no matter in what city or country, are places of great emotion. They are full of people whose lives have been turned upside down, people who are journeying through illness, healing, birthing, and death. The rooms may be sterile, but the lives are not.

Then, as I walked along the corridor, I noticed a window to my left. It was a huge wall of windows, almost floor to ceiling, and they looked down on a small courtyard. I stopped to look and discovered beautiful trees and shrubs that were obviously well cared for. There were paths for walking and benches to stop for a moment. Birds flitted about in the trees, and I noticed that some of the leaves had begun to turn. The curved edges gave the gardens an unhurried feeling, and the mass plantings spoke of order and calm.

Yes, I thought to myself, that space is perfect for a hospital. It is an acknowledgment of all that is happening here, all that patients and families are feeling, all the life that is coming and going. That garden is an invitation to reflect, meditate, weep, or rejoice. It offers a spot to leave behind the constant buzz of machinery and talk about the most important things, and to remember our connection to the whole of creation and the changing of the seasons. It is a space that speaks of life in all its richness.

Visiting or even creating natural spaces that promote healing is hardly a new idea. Early monastic communities, for instance, maintained gardens not just to grow food and medicinal herbs, but also as prayerful spaces that promoted physical and mental wellness. Patients were encouraged to spend time in cloistered gardens where they could sit or wander in comfort, and be reminded of God's power to create and heal. It was understood that time spent in such a place would bring relief from stress and pain, and aid those who were suffering.

The development of more scientific approaches to medicine, particularly here in the Western world, marked a change in the use of nature in the healing process. The medical community began to separate not only the body and the inner life of the spirit, but also isolated individual parts of the body so that eyes or ears, legs or spleens were treated independently. The importance of a holistic approach to healing waned. Landscaping in hospitals, where it was present at all, became nothing more than decoration.

More recently, as the medical community changed the way they cared for those suffering from addiction and mental health issues, gardens were reconsidered. Dr. Benjamin Rush, often referred to as the father of modern psychiatry, discovered in the course of his work that gardening had a positive effect on patients. Florence Nightingale, among others, was enthusiastic about including fresh air and sunshine as part of the treatment for tuberculosis patients.[1]

By the mid-twentieth century, formal horticultural programs began to emerge. Veterans from World War II, along with the elderly and those suffering from mental illness, benefitted from special new garden facilities. As hospices were created for cancer and HIV/AIDS patients, they often included natural spaces. Now it is not uncommon for gardens to be incorporated in hospital designs here in Canada and around the world, for the benefit of patients and their families as well as for staff members.

There is solid research behind this movement. One American study found that 95% of those interviewed reported decreased stress levels and a positive change in their mood after spending time in nature. Another Swedish study discovered that after heart surgery, those patients with an open view of nature experienced significantly lower stress and needed few doses of pain medicine. There are

clear physiological, emotional, and biochemical benefits to being around trees, plants, water, and sunshine.

Horticultural Therapy, as it is now called, is a widely recognized field. According to the Canadian Horticultural Therapy Association (www.chta.ca), it is a practice that uses plants, landscape, and garden-based activities to enhance well-being in all kinds of people. It is used not just in hospitals, but in schools, churches, prisons, long-term care facilities, hospices, and schools. Some go beyond simply providing a green space and offer programs that invite interaction and education. Raised planting boxes allow those in wheelchairs to enjoy growing tomatoes. Small greenhouses filled with potted plants teach personal responsibility. Garden paths invite reflection and prayer.

I like the growing trend toward including such green spaces into institutions. For years, I have appreciated any hospital's willingness to make such a large and beautiful investment in the emotional and spiritual well-being of its families. The funny thing was that after visiting my friend's family in Mississauga, it was no longer just a good theory. I felt its importance for myself.

Standing there by those windows, I didn't even have to go out into the courtyard to reap that garden's benefit. I paused and took a deep breath. I marvelled at its beauty and serenity. Then I carried on, mindful of this world that is so lovely and complicated, so full of life and death, so blessed by friendship and love.

*names have been changed

Kristine O'Brien is the minister at Trafalgar PC in Oakville, Ontario, where she shares her life with her husband and four children. She can also be found at www.bloomingreverend.com.

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[1] See Marcus and Barnes, Healing Gardens: Therapeutic Benefits and Design Recommendations New York: John Wiley and Sons 1999.

Our writer discovers Jesus at the coffee shop. Maybe you can too?

What's the difference between coffee after church on Sunday and coffee at the coffee shop during the week? Answer: At the coffee shop, they talk about Jesus. At least, that's been my experience.

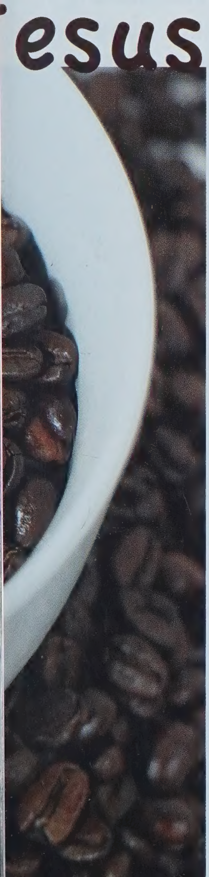
Last semester, when I was on sabbatical, I found coffee shops a great place to work. I knew I couldn't go to the one closest to home because I know too many people there. It's where a lot of church business happens. So I went to one in a different part of Hamilton, where I didn't know anyone.

by John Bowen

Of Coffee Shops and

At first, I got some really productive work done. None of the distractions of my study at home. The trouble began about two months in. Tim, the usual server, said one morning, “So, you know my name, and I know what coffee you like. What’s your name?” Uh-oh, I thought, here we go. So much for anonymity.

Meanwhile, I had begun to notice the regulars. Some were groups—folks who came after jogging, others after biking, some retired folk, a couple of groups of women, and a group of mentally challenged folk with their helpers. Then, there’s the man who always announces loudly as he marches in, “Have you seen the headlines today? Another murder in Toronto”—or whatever the latest disaster in the papers—“Isn’t it terrible?” (Tim confided to me one day, “Whatever it is, I just agree with him.”) And then there’s the bus driver who used to have two kids in our youth group, who stops his bus outside, comes in for his coffee, says hi, and tells me what he’s currently reading.



So far, I wasn’t being particularly distracted. Somewhere along the way, however, I began to overhear snatches of various conversations about “… church… death… the Pope… fundamentalism,” and, yes, “Jesus” (or, as one person insisted, Yeshua). Wow, I thought, isn’t that interesting? Who knew?

Then, sometime in July, one of the regulars, about my age, came in by himself. There was I, minding my own business, working on my book, drinking my favourite coffee. He plonked himself down in front of me, made eye contact, and said, “So, I see you here fairly regularly. My name’s Jim. What are you working on?” I confess: I groaned inwardly—me, the professor of evangelism. “Um, it’s a book of essays about the future of the church in Canada.” “Well,” said Jim, with a gentle smile, “I hope you won’t mind my saying so, but I hope there won’t be one. I grew up Jewish, but now I’m an atheist.” Not quite the kind of casual chit-chat that strangers usually engage in to break the ice.

Jim went on. “This isn’t just a coffee shop, you know. This is a mental health centre. I moved to Hamilton a few years ago with my wife. A year later, she died. We hadn't had time to get to know anyone, and this place saved my life." I believed him.

Then another of Jim's friends came in. Uh-oh, I thought, again. "Oh, Dave," said Jim, "this is John, and he's writing a book about the church." Dave grinned. "I used to be a regular church member. Then a couple of years back, I apostasized. I read Richard Dawkins, and that did it. What do you do for a living?"

Since then, I have had other brief conversations with people, and been introduced to various members of what I think of as Jim's group (though it isn't really). Susan, for example, is a writer, and sometimes we sit on either side of the fireplace (yes, the coffee shop has a fireplace) working in friendly silence on our laptops. One day, Dave introduced me to two school board trustees at a nearby table, whom I had overheard talking about the role of the Roman Catholic Church in society (without great enthusiasm, if you get my meaning). "Hi, John," said one, named Janice, "and what do you do for living?" When I told her, she said, "Oh, I gave up church some years ago—quite suddenly." "Like me," Dave chipped in. Then Janice added, "I do go to a discussion group about the historical Jesus, though." (There's that name again.)

For crying out loud, what's a writer to do to get some peace? The group that Jim is a part of meets regularly on a Friday (at other times of the week, it's more hit-and-miss as to who will be around), so on Fridays I knew I wouldn't get any work done, and began to go to a coffee shop a bit further from home. Well, guess what? One week, there were two pastors at the next table, interviewing a possible youth pastor. (They weren't being particularly quiet about it, so I knew.) Another week, there was a pastor (sometimes you can just tell) doing marriage prep with a starry-eyed young couple, and in a different corner were two older guys chatting away quietly, whom I managed to ignore … until one of them said something rather loudly about Jesus. On another occasion, I thought, "I'll just see how long it takes before I hear something religious." I had hardly opened up my computer when I heard it: "And—you know what?—they take the Bible literally." How long? Five minutes, on the nose.

I did toy with the idea of driving further and further from home in search of a quiet coffee shop where: (a) I don't know anyone, (b) no one wants to talk to me, and (c) nobody talks about Jesus. But maybe that's not what I'm meant to do. Now the sabbatical is over, and the book is done, what next? One voice said, "Write about it—it'll be interesting reading—but there's no reason for you to go back there anymore." But there was another voice—maybe even the voice of that Jesus I keep hearing about.

So I said to Jim towards the end of August, "Well, my book is nearly finished, and I'll be back to teaching soon. But maybe I'll just keep coming here for the pleasure of the conversation." His face lit up, and he said, "That would be delightful! Oh, and when your book gets published, we should have a celebration. Right here."

John Bowen has been associated with the Institute of Evangelism since 1997, and has been the Director since 1999. For twenty-five years he worked for Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, from 1989 till 1997, as National Evangelism Consultant and a campus evangelist. He has a Doctor of Ministry degree from McMaster University.

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"This isn't just a coffee shop, you know. This is a mental health centre."

On Life, Death, and Ministry…

by Joye Platford

My reflections from the last 13 years of living and serving as a Christian minister with families and individuals during times of health and illness

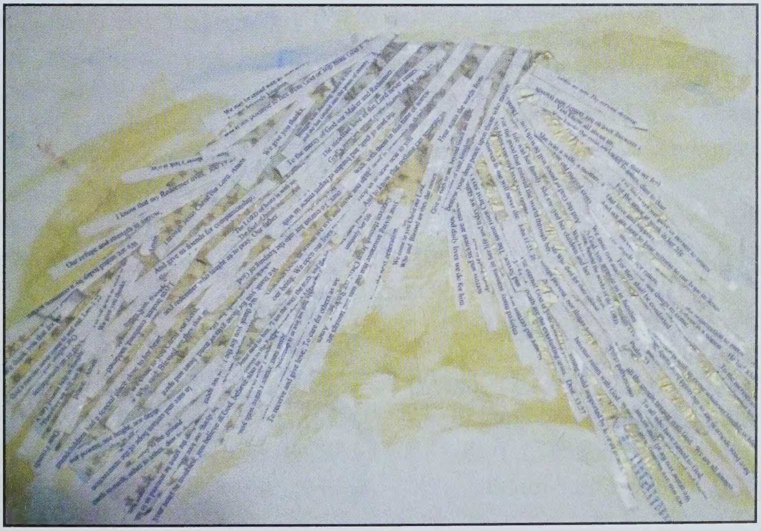
When I first began in ministry, I was a bit nervous and unsure about being with people, who were dying and having to perform funerals. At the age of 29, I had not experienced much about death. I took a deep breath, said a prayer, and stepped forward to offer myself to the families I served in my first congregation. What I learned is that God's spirit is very close during the time before death, and that it has been an honour to offer the love of Jesus to individuals and family in times of critical health and death.

During these times, I have been in homes, hospitals, nursing homes, and other places, and have been able to offer prayer; listen to deep ponderings and final words; and share communion, laughter, and tears. Occasionally, old hurts and wounds are magnified or there can be denial that death is coming, but even being a part of this, is a privilege. Time seems not to exist in a way that it does in the 'real' world. There is a focus only on the present time. Also, I have seen that people are more open to the Spirit and to each other.

Both God's Sprit, and the presence of others, reminds me that I don't do this alone. Truly, I have never felt alone in this ministry. I have God's Spirit with me and just as I see myself as only one part of the dying period, I am also only one part of the larger Christian community. The Christian community supports individuals and families with prayer, visits, food, and many helpful acts. About four years into my ministry, I had a period where I had 10 funerals in 12 weeks. Some of those who died were from my two-point congregation and others were from the community. It was very evident by the end of this period of time, that the pastor does not do his or her work all alone! I was thankful for the help of the Spirit, my congregation, community members, hospital staff, funeral directors, ladies' groups (there is a whole ministry of funeral lunches and sandwiches), and church musicians.

I had an interesting event occur during this time. Although I keep each funeral service on my computer (sometimes giving an additional paper copy to the family), the copy I use during the service, I shred—mostly to limit my paper files and also because I don't want an individual's funeral service to be loose in the recycling. As I emptied the shredder, I found fragments of funeral services, and I started to read them. It was as if I was reading the sound bites that the Spirit may have left still echoing in people's hearts and lives after the service. Being an artist, I was inspired and made a paper collage, like a prayer shawl, gluing together the fragments of sentences. Here is a sampling, "… it is not possible to flee from God or slip from God … my Redeemer lives … give us friends for companionship … the Lord of hosts is with us … bestow your deep peace upon those who mourn … underneath are the everlasting arms ... for the grace at work in her life … the Risen Christ says … we open our lives … to receive and give love … give us faith to see …." I saw that God's love and work continues after the death of a loved one, in the words of comfort in prayers, scripture, and interactions with others. I was reminded that all things are in God's time, and my prayer was that family members will hopefully continue to experience healing and grace over time and through the echoing of words.

Five years into ministry, I experienced my first major personal loss: the death of my grandmother. I could not be there while she was dying, but God gave me peace because my mom, as well as my grandmother's sister, was there with her. When she died, I experienced the other side of Christian ministry. I received many prayers, cards, and kind actions. I went to the funeral and did not participate in the leading



of the service—only heard the comforting prayers, sermon, and hymns—familiar, but now spoken to me through God's active spirit. Again, my experience of death was deepened as I entrusted my grandmother to the safekeeping of our almighty God as I was upheld by our Christian community.

After six years in ministry, I prepared to move from my first congregations in Ontario. During my time with them, I had officiated at 88 funerals in those communities. At the beginning of my time there, people would say, "It must be hard to perform funerals for people you don't know." In reality, all I had to do was to listen to people's life stories and offer prayers and hope—God did the rest. I found it was as equally difficult to do funerals of people that I didn't know as for those I knew, because for those I knew, I had a relationship with them. It was now time to add to my relationships as I moved to a new congregation.

My new congregation was in Alberta and here, I continued to serve families in the sacred times of life and death. But then after 10 years of ministry, I was faced with a new challenge—the possibility of my own death. On June 1, 2009, at the age of 39, I was diagnosed with colorectal cancer. I decided I wanted to face it bravely and transparently, so I shared the experience with my congregation. In truth, I was also in denial. I was only going to take a four-month break from my ministry. I also had told myself I was not supposed to have cancer, but the reality was that my two brothers and I all had cancer before the age of 40.

To date, I have experienced 14 months of treatments and have had a three year break from active ministry, thus far. However, I have experienced new life and new opportunities. I see life, relationships, and things differently now; I try to live in the here and now. Life is only a moment, there is much more in the eternity of time. Also, I was not afraid of death. I remember the night before my surgery, when I told myself I am not going to lose any sleep. I knew that my surgeon was not losing any sleep and that God and my family were there for me whatever happened next. Before my surgery I had many cards and calls from Alberta, and assurances of prayers. With that gift, I was calm and felt blessed.

I am only part way through life; I still have more to learn about living and death. I know it will not be easy as I have yet to experience the loss of a parent, sibling, or cousin, and I don't wish it for the near future. Yet, come what may, God and God's people will be with me as I grow and learn in faith.

Joye Platford lives in Manitoba and is currently doing pulpit supply, substitute teaching, and working with seniors, as well as exploring art and spirituality.

Easter Worship:
Loved by God

by Julia E Apps Douglas

The Easter story is familiar to us. It takes us through the last days of Jesus Christ's life and resurrection; and leaves us in awe of his promises to never leave us.

This worship looks at key teachings and the prayer that Christ makes to his Father before his sacrifice. This shows us the amazing love Christ has for each of us.

This is an opportunity to look at the scriptures and see the proof of our Lord's love. The reflection questions are intended to examine the relationship we have with God. These could be shared together, or reflected on in silence.

If you are not part of a women's group, consider using these reflections the week before Easter in your personal time with God. Listen to some inspiring music, read the scripture passage, and reflect on the questions.

My prayer is that you know that you are loved by the God who created you and walks with you.

Call to Worship

Leader: Let us Worship

One: Christ is risen!

All: He is risen indeed!

One: Stones roll away, tombs are open, new possibilities are born, women sing for joy, and men race to share the good news.

All: Things that were old are becoming young again, and all things are returning to their pristine beauty.

One: The Easter joy of the living Christ Jesus be with you all.

All: And also with you.

Prayer: (in unison)

Most wonderful God, we no longer look for Jesus among the dead, but with the living. We thank you for the glorious love that is now immortally among us! We pray that we may abandon ourselves in adoration and commit our energies to serving beside Christ in this world, which has now become a territory of much promise. To you be all thanksgiving, praise, and glory, on earth and in highest heaven! Amen.

Hymn #699: All the way my Saviour leads me
Reading: John 14:1–8 Jesus, the Way to the Father
Reflection: What do you think that living in God's house would be like?

Hymn #283: Let every Christian pray
Reading: John 14:15–21 Jesus promises us the Holy Spirit
Reflection: Do you feel the Holy Spirit in your life?

Hymn #558: The Son of God proclaim (verses1, 3, and 4)
Reading: John 15:9–17 Love one another
Reflection: Do you love others as Jesus loves you?

Hymn #389: Breathe on me, breath of God (verses 1–2)
Reading: John 17:6–13 Jesus prays for us
Reflection: What would you like Jesus to pray for you?

Hymn #389 Breathe on me breath of God (verses 3–4)
Reading: John 17:13–26
Reflection: What does this tell you about God?

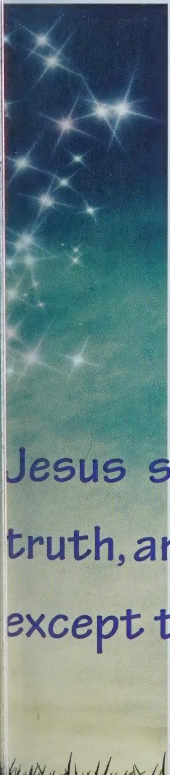
Prayer: (in unison)

Leader: Let us pray together

Lord Jesus, we look to the days ahead of us as we journey along the road with you. Having heard your teachings, we know that it is us who now do the work that lies ahead in your name.

We are your hands and feet, eyes and ears, and you have given us voices to speak for those who are voiceless. Grant us your grace to carry out our tasks, and may you be glorified in all we do.

We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.



Offering:

Leader: In our journey, we share not only our hands, feet, eyes, ears, and voices, but also from the finances you have entrusted to us. The offering will now be received.

(The offering is collected.)

Leader: Let us pray. May all that we give be used to carry out your work and glorify your name. Amen.

Blessing:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." (Ephesians 1:3)

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6

2012 Study Tour to Israel/Palestine

by Janet Brewer

How can you learn more but know and understand less?

I was a participant in the recent Israel-Palestine Study Tour, along with another 18 participants and two leaders from The Presbyterian Church in Canada. We visited, listened, discussed, and tried to understand many different situations and scenarios during a 10-day tour of the country. These were our goals:

- Raise awareness about mission work: what, where, and how it is done effectively.
- Build deeper connection and understanding of partnership in mission.
- Inspire local action from global experience—share with others when we returned.

We started our tour in Bethlehem and stayed in a hotel immediately across the road from the separation (apartheid?) wall. On the wall were many stories written by Palestinians describing their experiences during the building of this wall. We spent two days visiting Hebron, and places in Bethlehem, learning about the "separation" of this section of the West Bank under the control of the Palestinian Authority.

We also visited the historical sites—Church of the Nativity and

Shepherd's Field in Bethlehem. We went into both the Ibrahim Mosque and Synagogue at the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron, and walked down an empty Shuhada Street and into the very busy H1 Palestinian market area filled with shoppers preparing for the Eid Festival in Hebron.

We met with members of the EAPPI (Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel) and listened to their stories. They provide a protective presence to vulnerable communities. (To learn more about EAPPI, visit their website at www.eappi.org.)

Each night, we met to discuss the day's activities and to close the day with worship. We appreciated being able to do this because as we heard so much during the day it was good to be able to sort through things and hear other's impressions.

From Bethlehem, we travelled to Tiberius. From Tiberius, we ventured out each day to visit biblical and historical sites—Sea of Galilee (we had a sail); Mount of Beatitudes; Tabgha (where Jesus fed the 5,000); Nazareth; the beautiful Jezreel and Jordan Valleys; and the traditional site on the Jordan River where the baptism of Jesus took place. We also visited a Kibbutz on the east side of the Sea of Galilee (in Israeli possession since 1967).

From Tiberius, we travelled through Haifa (where we worshipped with a Palestinian Christian congregation), along the Mediterranean coast, and to Jerusalem stopping at Mount Carmel and the aqueduct at Caesarea. We settled in our hotel just outside the Damascus Gate and the Muslim Quarter of Old Jerusalem.

From our base in Jerusalem, we travelled to Jericho (Palestinian Authority) and went up the Mount of Temptation by cable car. That day, we also visited the Dead Sea and some took time to have a swim.

We then went to Ramallah (Palestinian Authority) to visit with a former colleague of our leader, The Rev. Noel Gordon, who has stayed in Ramallah since retiring from his teaching job there. He toured us through his home, Dar Mansûr, that he had kept in the same way as a Palestinian family living in the 1930s. We experienced the daily trial of Palestinians leaving Ramallah and entering Jerusalem—security and searches.

On several evenings, we had speakers: one of our tour leaders, Mr. Yusef Daher (one of the authors of "A Moment of Truth —A word of faith, hope, and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering") spoke to us; an Israeli lawyer told us about his work helping Palestinians; and a panel of three people—a Palestinian Muslim, a Palestinian Christian, and a Israeli Rabbi—discussed their experiences living in Israel-Palestine and the problems and how these are escalating.

We also visited Sabeel in Jerusalem and listened to their stories. Sabeel is an ecumenical grassroots liberation theology movement among Palestinian Christians. (www.sabeel.org) And we spent a short time at Yad Vashem Museum, which is a haunting memorial to the Holocaust. (www.yadvashem.org).

On our last day, we walked down the Mount of Olives to the Garden of Gethsemane. We then proceeded along the Via Dolorosa to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and finally on to the Garden Tomb in the Old City.

I visited Israel-Palestine in February 2010 and my tour definitely had a pro-Israeli slant. This time, we were exposed to the Palestinian point-of-view and even after two visits to the Holy Land, I still feel muddled. We had a huge amount of information to absorb. We saw things and listened. Who is right in this situation?

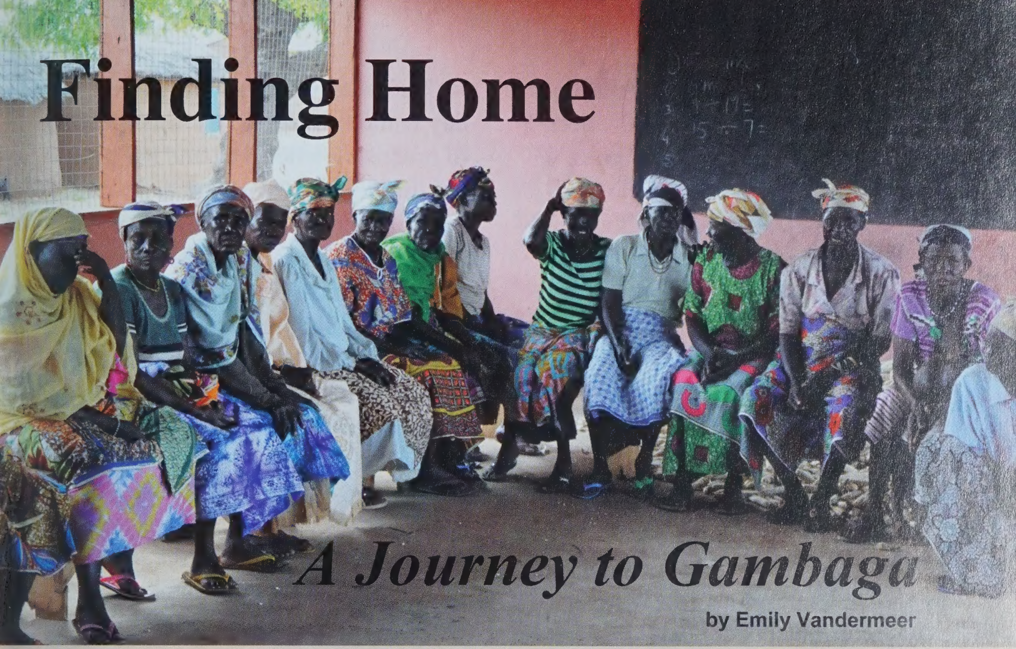
Since returning to Canada, we have now heard that rockets are being fired back and forth into Gaza and Israel by Hamas and the Israeli Defense Forces. Will the violence ever stop on each side? Will there ever be understanding on both sides and an end to hostilities? I do not know and I don't feel I understand the situation any better now than I did before the trip, although I have lots more information. What can we do here in Canada? Is there a way to help both Palestinians and Israelis? Can there be a meeting of ways here in Canada—away from the Middle East? Can that "peace" be taken over there?

Also, I do not understand how a people so badly treated and awfully abused around the world can treat another general population so poorly? Is it that the abused has become the abuser? So here I am, left to continue to question, to learn, and to pray.

Finding Home

A Journey to Gambaga

by Emily Vandermeer



Wuni was sleeping in the bedroom they shared when it happened. Her husband, looming over her with a torch in his hand, was prepared to drag her to the village chief for punishment. The accusation? Witchcraft. More specifically, it was believed she had used magic to try and kill a man. There was no trial and no witnesses were called, as one might expect in reaction to such a serious accusation, especially one that promised grave repercussions. Discarded by her husband, condemned by her entire community, and viewed with fear and suspicion, as an alleged witch, Wuni faced the very real possibility of being beaten—or worse. So she fled to the Gambaga Outcast Home—a place of refuge for women in northern Ghana, for those who have been branded as witches.

The journey to Gambaga is a difficult one. The roads are barren and deserted. There is little shelter from the sun, except for a large stretch of surrounding forest. The village itself is a small collection of densely constructed homes, with the chief’s compound and outcast home at its centre. Over time, the chief’s compound has come to serve a dual purpose—to keep nearby villages safe from the perceived threat of witchcraft and to be a safe haven for the accused. Many women have made this journey—alone or with their families—to escape certain persecution.

To those of us living in North America, modern day belief in witchcraft is perplexing, but in Ghana the belief is very real. It permeates society. It is a social fact. Because of these entrenched beliefs, there is a tendency to attribute events, such as the failure of crops or unforeseen deaths, to witchcraft. Other times, allegations are motivated by a family member's jealousy. Accusations rest entirely on suspicion and the results are almost always disastrous for the women accused.

Almost as old as the belief in witchcraft is the belief in the Gambarana, a local chief who is said to have the ability to contain the power of witches and conduct cleansing rituals in order to "rehabilitate" those associated with supernatural powers. The traditional cleansing ritual is designed to remove the title "witch" and welcome the women into the compound. The label "witch" is highly stigmatized and the women living in the outcast home are quick to point out that they are not actually witches.

When Magazia's husband passed away, she refused to marry his brother, as is tradition in Ghana. Soon after, her brother-in-law accused her of being a witch, saying a young girl had confided in him that Magazia had used magic to try and kill her. Although based on the words of a child, the allegations were taken seriously and Magazia was beaten severely. She was told that if she did not leave the village, she would be burned. Fearing for her life, Magazia saw no other alternative, but to leave her children and make the three-hour trek, on foot, to the Gambaga Outcast Home.

Sue's story is much the same. One day without warning, she was accused of practising witchcraft and her guilt was immediately confirmed. She fled her village to live with her father, but two years later he passed away, as did her uncle. While attending her uncle's funeral, members from her old community appeared and beat her. Enraged, they yelled that more was to come unless she went to Gambaga. So she did.

"Words cannot express what I heard when I was at Gambaga," says Matt Foxall, Youth in Mission and Mission Trip Coordinator for The Presbyterian Church in Canada. In late November, Matt and a group of Presbyterians had the opportunity to meet the residents of Gambaga and hear about their harrowing experiences firsthand.

Over and over again, countless women relayed the events that led to their presence at Gambaga. "It all weighed so heavily on me. I couldn't believe these stories were true, but they happen every day."

The Presbyterian Church in Canada, through Presbyterian World Service & Development, is working in Ghana to conduct outreach with communities to combat the beliefs and misinformation that lead to these allegations and the victimization of innocent women. When asked what he would like to share with Canadians about his visit, Matt Foxall replies, "(These women) want to share their stories, say thank you, and press upon us the good we can do. It's overpowering to see how your money is used and the difference it is making."

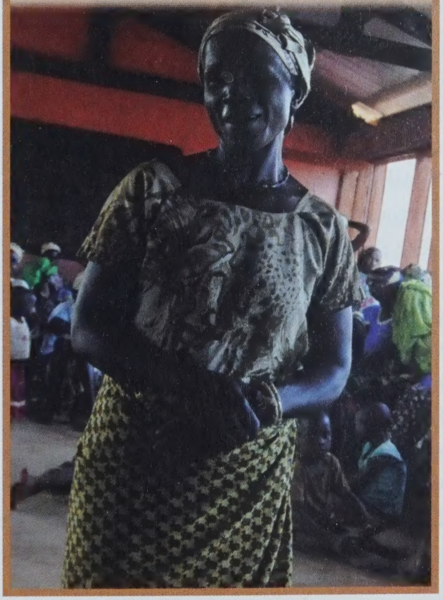
It is a difficult task to change deeply ingrained cultural beliefs, but through advocacy and awareness initiatives, communities are learning about human rights, gender equality, and respect for women and the elderly. At the community level, mental illness, disabilities, and deaths resulting from malaria are also mistakenly attributed to witchcraft. As such, program staff teach communities about the causes, prevention, and treatment of health issues. With increased understanding about previously unexplained phenomenon and knowledge about the fair treatment of women, communities are less likely to make false allegations.

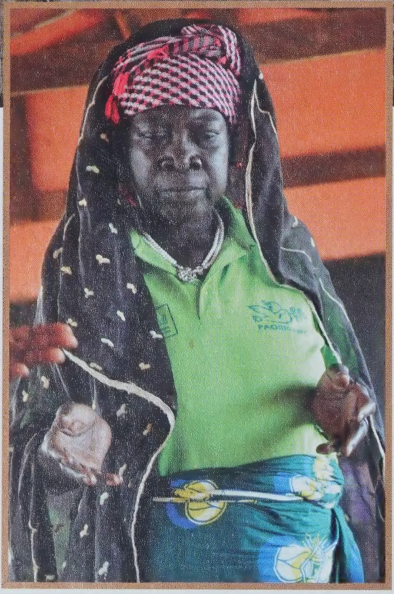
Support for the Gambaga Go-Home project also helps women who have been deemed "rehabilitated" by the Gambarana to go home. Reintegration is far from a simple process, and villages can be reluctant to accept an alleged witch back into their community, even with the stamp of approval from the Gambarana. To help prepare for their successful return, project staff conduct sensitization sessions and meet with the women, village chiefs, and the accusers to negotiate a peaceful return.

Recognizing that it takes time for attitudes and beliefs to change, the Gambaga Go-Home project is seeing positive results. Between 2010 and 2012, 123 women have successfully returned home to be reunited with friends and family. The Gambaga Go-Home project, once home to hundreds of women, is now home to roughly 85 women and their children.

"It's not just

Through advocacy and awareness initiatives, communities are learning about human rights, gender equality, and respect for women and the elderly.





about numbers, but caring for other people," says Matt Foxall, when asked about the achievements of the project. "The simple fact that a chief of a community (the Gambarana) is willing to take in an outcast; and that there are actually people willing to assist in a situation like that, is a success in itself."

Through the project, women who were once considered outcasts, have found acceptance and are welcomed without judgement into a tight-knit community. They bond over shared experiences, care for one another, and are committed to helping each other overcome the emotional trauma.

"When women come in, they join a community who have been through what they have been through. They can say to one another, 'Hey, you're not alone. We've been through this too. Let's get through it together,'" says Matt. This is extremely powerful.

This sense of acceptance extends beyond Gambaga. By working with the communities to overcome the prejudices that lead to accusations of witchcraft, the women are able to return home and begin to reclaim their dignity. Through skills training, women start small businesses and contribute meaningfully to their communities. They are no longer outcasts, but valued members who have returned home.

You can view more photos from The Presbyterian Church in Canada trip to Ghana at: http://bit.ly/VAWwiO.

A Call to Prayer: Syria

Christians in Syria today

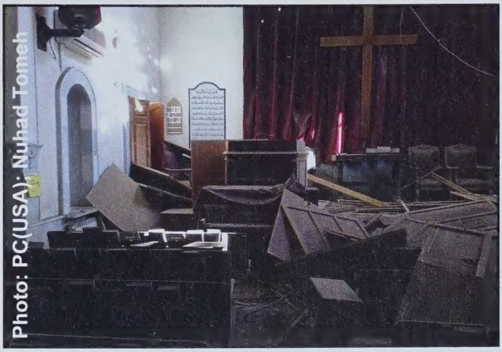
by Huda Kandalaft

As I write this, Christians around the world celebrate Christmas, but many in Lebanon and Syria are very worried and anxious about the escalating violence in Syria. The humanitarian situation is devastating: tens of thousands killed and wounded, hundreds of thousands of displaced Syrians within their own country, and hundreds of thousands of refugees in neighbouring Turkey, Jordan, Iraq, and Lebanon. There is also a shortage of food, fuel, electricity, and medical care in many of the cities and towns. It is indeed very difficult to celebrate Christmas in such a situation. It is not the best setting for a "traditional" Christmas celebration. Yet paradoxically, this situation in Syria, and the whole Near East area today, is very similar to that of the very first Christmas before Christmas celebrations became what we would call, traditional.

Jesus was born in a country that was occupied by a foreign power; the economic situation was hard; religious freedom was heavily restricted; the political regime was repressive; those who spoke the truth to those in power were beheaded; and religious zealots were everywhere. The birth of Jesus was 'observed' by a massacre of babes and infants, and Jesus and his family were displaced to another country! This is how Christians in the Middle East felt this year during Christmas. The president of the Near East School of Theology, Dr. George Sabra, wrote: "We are not just geographically in the region where Christ is born; we are also living under the same uncertain turbulent, insecure, unpredictable, and precarious situation."

Syria's "Arab Spring" events started in March 2011 in the city of Deraa and spread rapidly throughout the country. People took to the streets spontaneously, and were quickly joined by protesters—at first mostly secular, intellectual liberals—who had been planning a revolt for a few years. Peaceful demonstrations were calling for reformation.

The atmosphere of protests and brutal government response provided an opportunity for several opposition groups to not only join in the protests, but to hijack what started as peaceful calls for reforms. These opposition groups, who are heavily armed, include Islamists as well as secular groups and Army defectors. Different opposition groups are supported by different Middle Eastern countries (such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar) and other forces such as Al Qaeda. Some reports have documented the smuggling of arms



Presbyterian Church in Homs, destroyed in crossfire between government forces and armed groups.

Streets of Hamediah.

via Lebanon to insurgents and militia in Syria. Two opposition groups—the Syrian National Council and the Syrian Free Army—have been given refuge in Turkey. The Assad regime is supported by many in Syria. Christians are divided; some are pro-government and others are not.

The clashes in Syria continue to intensify to dangerous levels, particularly in the cities of Homs and Aleppo. Some analysts are warning of a civil war in Syria. Innocent civilians, including Christians, are living in fear and suffering. The United Nations reported that as many as 60,000 Syrians have been killed, including security forces and army personnel. The international community's efforts to secure a peaceful resolution to the crisis have failed thus far.

Syrians are bewildered as to why they are made to pay for an international desire to isolate Iran. They fear outside interference would fuel a civil war that could turn into a sectarian war. The Lebanese civil war is still vivid in their memory. They also fear the possibility of a similar outcome to that of the 2003 American-led invasion of Iraq.

The situation of Christians in Syria today

The population of Syria is an estimated 22.5 million. Christians make up about 8% of the population. Many churches have been destroyed, including the Presbyterian churches in Homs and Aleppo and a 4th century Syriac Orthodox church in Homs.

The Christians who have a way out of the country are leaving, but unlike the time after the fall of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, when Christians in the hundreds of thousands fled Iraq, the surrounding countries and other European and North American countries, have closed their doors to Syrians.

For the Syrian Christians who want to flee the country, there are not many possibilities left. They are trying to flee to countries which have a degree of freedom of religion, but they are not granted visas. Whoever has the money and the ability to leave is leaving. The number of Christians has decreased significantly with thousands fleeing.

Today, Syria is passing through one of the darkest times of its history, if not the darkest. The Christians in general are affected and Presbyterians, being a minority of the minority, are affected too. The Presbyterian Church in Homs (middle city of Syria), where I grew up and served, is completely destroyed and the congregation is scattered. People have fled either to neighbouring Christian villages or those who were able to get a visa gone abroad abroad to be with family members.

After being uprooted, people have no jobs and no income, but have to pay high rents for a one-room residence for their families. There is no electricity and no fuel for heating. Basic necessities are very expensive and extremely hard to find. Many are dreading a humanitarian disaster.

More than two-thirds of the students of the Presbyterian Secondary School in Homs, Syria, fled the city because of threats from armed groups. The Presbyterian Elderly Centre, which used to be a home for more than 66 elderly residents, has now only 27. All 27 have no families to take them in. Sister Valentine, the nun who runs the centre, along with the minister, the Rev. Mofid Karajaili, and a few other employees care for the residents with incredible Christian love, even though the centre is in the middle of a heated neighbourhood.

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Ottawa, where I currently serve as the Director of Christian Development, has made a connection with the elderly centre. We prayed with them over the phone, we sang hymns, and we worshipped together. It was deeply touching to ask them, "What can we do for you?" and hear their reply, "pray for us."

Today, the Middle East is covered with a white blanket of snow; a rare event in this climate. The cold weather is adding to the plight of the people, but Christians are wondering if this is a reminder from God that even in dark days such as these there is a room for joy. People are already suffering from the violence and lack the necessities of life. Please prevent this from turning into a full-fledged humanitarian disaster.

Prayer for the people of Syria
by Colleen Wood

God of peace, we pray for Syria. Like so much of the world, the more we learn about an area the more questions we have. The one prayer we can confidently bring is to ask that there be an end to the violence in Syria.

We pray for all those affected by the conflict in Syria. For those who have fled their homes, we pray that they will find refuge and the necessities of life. For those still wandering, we pray that countries will open their doors to those in need. For those who have lost everything, especially loved ones, please provide comfort. For those living in fear, we pray for their safety.

We pray for the Christians living in Syria. Give hope to these faith communities that have been scattered. Help them to find hope amidst the rubble of their places of worship. Help them to react in a way that shows your overwhelming love.

We especially pray now for the elderly people in The Presbyterian Elderly Centre. Be with them and give them peace. Protect them from all that is happening around them. Continue to guide and strengthen the workers at the centre, especially Sister Valentine and the Rev. Mofid Karajaili.

Loving God, may those fighting in Syria put down their guns. Provide reconciliation to those that are enemies and bring your peace to Syria. And for those of us who are watching from afar, help us to find ways to support those that are hurting in Syria, and around the world.

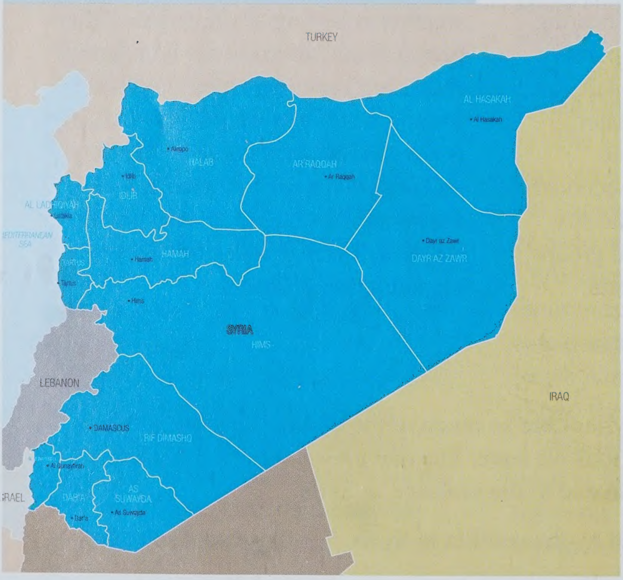
In Jesus name we pray,
Amen.

Did You Know?

Syria is officially the Syrian Arab Republic. It is a country in the Middle East, bordering Lebanon to the west, Turkey to the north, Iraq to the east, Jordon to the south, and Israel to the southwest. It has a population of just over 22 million.

It has diversity in both ethnicity and religion. It ethnicity is primarily made up of Arabs, Kurds, and Armenians. The majority of the population is Muslim, but there is a small Christian population, and an even smaller Jewish population.

The Arab Spring generally refers to protests and demonstrations that began across the Arab world, beginning in December 2010, or early 2011.



Book Reviews

reviewed by Colleen Wood

When Your Grandparent Dies: A Healing Handbook for Kids

written by Victoria Ryan and illustrated by R.W. Alley

Elf-help Books for Kids
When Your Grandparent Dies
A Child's Guide to Good Grief
Written by Victoria Ryan
Illustrated by R.W. Alley
When Your Pet Dies
A Healing Handbook for Kids
Written by Victoria Ryan
Illustrated by R.W. Alley
Elf-help Books for Kids

Death is a part of life, and often the first exposure to death for a child is the loss of a grandparent or great-grandparent. I was really impressed with this book and the way it gently explained the entire process in such a simple, but meaningful way. First, it explains to a child that a grandparent might be different before they die, they might look different or not be able to talk, or if they are in a hospital, they might have tubes attached to machines.

Then, this book explains death to the child—the body no longer works and cannot be fixed, but we are reminded that we are more than a body. It continues by talking about our spirit and that the grandparent's spirit is still alive, followed by a lovely, child-appropriate explanation of heaven.

As the book continues, it covers feelings, talking to others, and activities to remember, such as making a memory box. It also talks about the funeral and burials. I would suggest this book to anyone with a child who is experiencing the loss of a grandparent. (There is also a book in the same line on the topic, When a Mom or Dad Dies.)

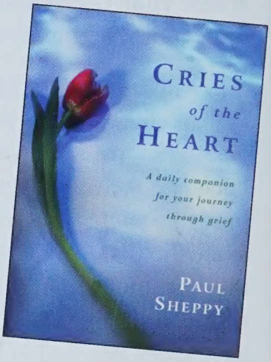
When Your Pet Dies: A Healing Handbook for Kids

written by Victoria Ryan
illustrated by R.W. Alley

My three-year-old daughter stills talks about our hamster, Peanut, that died about six-months ago. "Mommy, Peanut died. I miss her." Then, she will quickly start talking about Molly, our guinea pig, or change subjects completely. Even at three, it was a memorable experience.

As adults, we sometimes trivialize the death of a child's pet, but to the child this can be a time of true grief. This book, When Your Pet Dies, is a wonderful resource to have around. It first explains death (something many of us are not good at) and gives some suggestions for helping the child to say goodbye. It also suggests a funeral for a pet. I like that it talks about feelings, such as anger and sadness. My only word of caution is that the book does talk about pets going to heaven, which may or may not be contrary to your own personal beliefs.

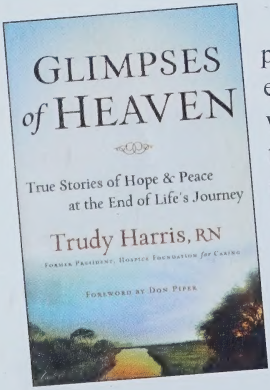
Cries of the Heart
by Paul Sheppy



In some cultures, after the death of a loved one, the bereaved are given special care for 40 days. Following in this tradition, this book contains 40 days of prayers and reflections for a bereaved person, as well as additional readings for some of the special dates that will follow—birthdays, anniversaries, and Christmas.

Although in some ways, this is a very simple book, it is also a meaningful one. It explains some of the feelings that come with death and gives permission to those feelings. Each day contains a scripture passage, a thought, and a prayer. I like that they were very brief, as sometimes after the death of a loved one, concentration is difficult. I also like that this book contained readings for significant days beyond the first 40 days. Grieving takes time and special days can bring back the pain and grief in unexpected ways.

Glimpses of Heaven, True Stories of Hope and Peace at the End of Life's Journey
by Trudy Harris



This book is written by a former hospice nurse and provides the reader with 40 stories of hope—stories of lives ending in comfort and in peace. One story is of a dying man who had lived a 'wild' life. One day he confessed all his sins to Trudy, who asked, "Have you any idea how much God really loves you?" The man raised his arms into the air and loudly said, "Yes, I do." What a wonderful response!

Another story speaks of the death of a six-week-old infant, who was born with a heart defect. After her death, the nurse brought the parents yellow roses. The roses were a sign to these parents that their child was in God's hands. Even in the hardest of deaths, comfort can be found.

For some, reading this book will provide an outlet for tears. For others, it may bring a gentle peace, perhaps even some joy. Others might not be ready for this book after the death of a loved one, but may turn to it later down the road. Although this book might be good for those facing death, or for those who are caregivers of someone who is dying or has died, I think that this might just be a good read for anyone—we can all use a little hope!

Brian Johnston
Romania
Year in Review

My first two weeks of 2012 were spent in Canada doing the usual medical checkups and renewing my passport. Yes, I still have a Canadian passport! On Christmas Eve, I was delighted to worship in the new Knox sanctuary in Waterloo, which was architecturally designed to truly "let in the light."

Although I was not officially on furlough, my pastors, Brooke and Linda Ashfield, asked me to lead the service on January 15 sharing some of my 'Romanian Reflections' through photography, music, and carefully chosen scripture passages.

On returning to Romania, I needed to have an oral exam with all my English students. (They had already completed the written requirements of the exam before Christmas.) For part of their exam, I used the church service from Knox, Waterloo, and asked them to state their observations and give their opinions. One student expressed that he couldn't believe there could be so much art in a religious service and I responded saying, "Are we not in church to worship God our creator and the greatest artist of all?"

I organized another choir excursion in early March—participating in a small village on Saturday evening and in one of the largest Reformed churches in Romania on Sunday morning. Early in 2012, I also started singing in the Hungarian Pedagogical Choir, which is for me both musically and linguistically quite rewarding. I was able to involve this choir in my Spring Concert, which I arranged in my institute on April 25, just before leaving for Canada for my two-month furlough.

During my furlough, I was able to speak in many new places and to meet many new people. I spoke at

Overseas Staff Birthdays

March
13 – Todd Statham, Malawi

April
17 – Peter Daniel Pandy-Szekeres, Hungary

May
1 – Mio Samuel, Malawi

the General Assembly and really enjoyed being at the Knox College convocation—a first for me.

On June 17, I organized a special "Celebration of Connections" concert, once again at Knox, Waterloo. I was honoured that the Rev. Richard Fee came to represent The Presbyterian Church in Canada and emphasized in his opening remarks the importance of the "cross cultural sharing," which occurs in such celebrations.

The Fall semester started with more difficulty than normal in that students now have more flexibility in studying at other faculties. Organizing a suitable timetable for both English classes and choir rehearsals became a nightmare. A few students had to leave the choir for a semester and I worked quite hard to train some new choristers. During this time, I had two very important exhibitions in Kezdivasarhely and in St. George organized by two former choir members/pastors.

I now have a student, Istvan Tarkanyi, from the third year to assist me with English teaching. The general high-school English level seems to be dropping yearly and I am really glad that along with the intermediate and advanced levels, someone can help remediate the situation by concentrating on some basic English skills.

My traditional Advent program was held on December 12 with an overflowing crowd. We welcomed a guest choir, Melodeus, from the community which had a huge success and resulted in a record number of young people in our audience. I also travelled to two villages to assist two friends in their Christmas celebrations. All in all, the semester ended quite positively.

In closing, on behalf of all my students I say a special 'thank you' to all our Canadian friends who continue to support and encourage us in our ongoing service in Christ's name.

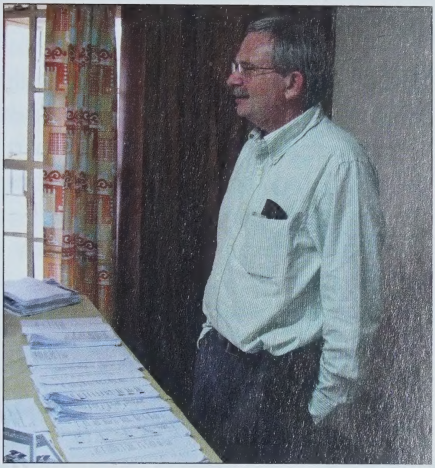
Rick Allan
Malawi
The Road to Maralal

Just where is Maralal? This town of about 25,000 is the gateway to Kenya's North country. The planning of the municipality's layout was done in the days when Kenya was a British colony, and one of the most noticeable features is the very wide streets (equivalent in size to a six-lane highway!) in the centre of town.

Reaching Maralal can at times be a challenge. Once the tarmac comes to an end, it is necessary to travel over a 100-km dirt road. Some years back, my work with the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) required me to cover this dirt road two or three times a year. A few months ago, I needed to make a return trip. Although in the past I had driven myself in a small Suzuki, I decided to opt for public transport after hearing about the condition of the road—sections had been badly damaged during this year's rainy season and some parts of the road were still under water. If I had attempted to make the necessary detours by driving my own car, I am sure it would have ended in chaos.

Accompanied by a church minister with whom I work closely, I boarded a very cramped and rickety Nissan van in the last town before the dirt road started. Baggage was pushed under all the seats meaning there was no place to put one's feet. The backs of the seats in front were so close together that I and the other passengers were continually squirming around to try to give relief to our knee caps.

Once on our way, the sparsely vegetated landscape extended beyond the horizon in all directions. High temperatures are the norm and some people in the van would open the windows while others would keep the windows fully shut, perhaps not liking the breeze or the dust. I sat in the middle sweltering for most of the time.



In looking out the window, it was easy to think that no one lived in this part of the country, but that is not the case. Subsistence farmers do sparsely populate the area—they survive on planting crops around the rainy season and working on the large cattle ranches. At one point along the barren road, a primary school suddenly appeared with about 200 students; most of these students have to walk several hours to and from school.

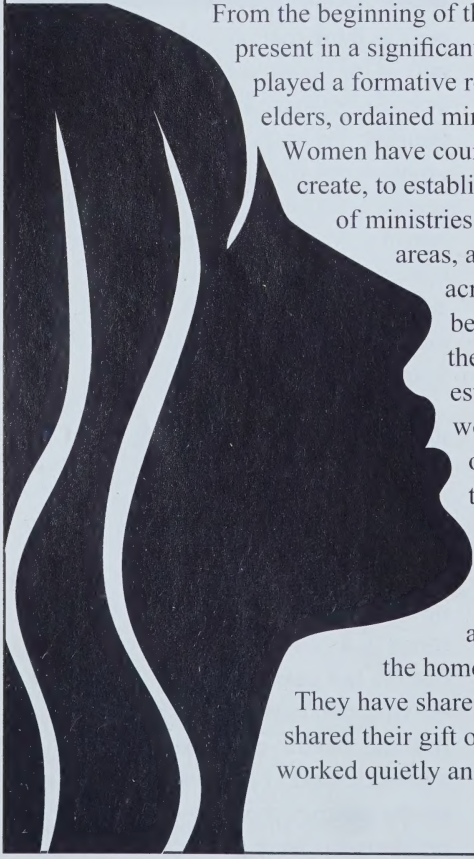
Security is a problem and at times banditry is rampant. Vehicles are forced to stop and everything in one's pocket and baggage is taken. Usually there is no violence, but shootings and murders are not rare. If there is a flare-up of banditry, then vehicles need to travel in a convoy with police guards. For the last year or so, the situation on the road had been relatively quiet and thus the van travelled alone without a police escort. I deliberated little on the security problem—most of my thoughts were on my knee caps pressing against the seat ahead of me!

The reasons for banditry in the area are of course multi-factorial with poverty and communal (tribal) clashes being the most significant. In this part of the country, several different tribes border each other, leading to cattle rustling and resulting conflict, which can easily boil over into generalized banditry.

Even though the landscape appears fairly barren, wildlife is present here. On this particular trip I saw a pair of giraffes in the middle of the road, antelope, and zebras. Herds of elephants can be sighted from time

Presbyterian Woman of Faith Award

Barbel von Wartenburg-Potter claims, "Women hold up half the sky!"



From the beginning of the Christian story, women have been present in a significant way. Through the centuries, they have played a formative role as disciples, apostles, teachers, elders, ordained ministers, deaconesses, and missionaries. Women have courageously and faithfully gone forward to create, to establish, to empower, and to support a variety of ministries, within the inner city, throughout rural areas, and among our First Nations. Whether across Canada or overseas, women have been trail-blazers, unafraid to step out into the unknown and take a leap of faith as they established new ministries and began new work. They have stood in solidarity with others. They have offered a cup of water to the thirsty, a hot casserole to the hungry, a listening ear to the lonely, a comforting arm to a crying child, encouraging words to the teenager, a crocheted blanket to a newborn, and an outstretched hand to the homeless, the sick, and those with challenges. They have shared the gospel in creative ways. They have shared their gift of music, art, and writing. Many have worked quietly and faithfully behind the scenes.

to time, but unfortunately not this time. The area is known for its lion population, but since lions are mainly nocturnal, none was sighted.

It took us five hours to reach Maralal; due to the poor road condition, the van only averaged a speed of 20 km per hour. After climbing out of the vehicle, it took us some time to recover from the knee pain and discomfort; thereafter, we ate and found a place to sleep.

After four days, the work we had to do in Maralal was accomplished and we repeated our trip in the other direction.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada and the Women's Missionary Society have established a new award to recognize the work of women within The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

THE PRESBYTERIAN WOMAN OF FAITH AWARD will be given to a woman—lay, elder, diaconal minister, or ordained clergy—who is, or has been, part of The Presbyterian Church in Canada to honour her either for a particular accomplishment or a life time of achievement.

Do you know a woman in The Presbyterian Church in Canada who is, or has, made a particular accomplishment or a lifetime achievement in the church or the community who should be recognized by the national church?

It's easy to nominate her. Ask your WMS group, Presbytery/Presbyterial, Synod/Synodical, or congregation to support the nomination. Go to either the WMS or The Women's Gathering websites (www.wmspcc.ca or www.womensgathering.ca) to obtain a nomination form. You will need to write a short biography of the woman and a brief description of her ministry or accomplishment. Two people are required to sign the nomination form.

During the Fall, the Awards Committee will evaluate the nominations and choose the first recipient of this award.

The first recipient of this award will be recognized at the Presbyterian Women's Gathering in Richmond Hill, Ontario, in May 2014.

For more information, contact Liz Brewer at The Presbyterian Church in Canada: 416-441-1111 (1-800-619-7301) or email her at ebrewer@presbyterian.ca

Deadline: November 30, 2013

In the Society

Presbyterial

The women of Lindsay Presbyterial met for their Fall meeting on September 26 at Beacan Presbyterian Church in Beaverton.

The day began with fellowship and gathering music, and then Marie Page, President of the Beacon Ladies, welcomed the group. Linda Grace constituted the meeting with prayer, and the group from St. Andrew's, Lindsay, led the Worship Service.

Following the business meeting, reports, and announcements we had a delicious lunch served by the Beacon Ladies.

Local

Five members of St. John's Church, White Rock, BC, who are over 100 years old were honoured recently. (From left) Dorothy Hayes, Jessie Laudan, Jeanne Coiffee, Winnifred Carson, Marjorie Sanders with minister, the Rev. Willem van der Westhuizen and his wife Bessie. Jessie continues to be an active member of the Molly Doka WMS, and has served as Friendship Secretary for many years.

The Rev. Glenn Inglis spoke at the WMS Mission Service at Morewood Presbyterian Church on October 21. The WMS presented a Life Membership to Gladys Carruthers and a Certificate of Appreciation to Isobel Wooldridge. On December 23, the group presented Rebecca McLeod with a Certificate of Appreciation.

Gladys Carruthers and Isobel Wooldridge

Rebecca McLeod and Lois Beaton

Retirement for the Rev. Anne Yee-Hibbs

The Rev. Anne Yee-Hibbs was honoured on the occasion of her retirement on November 30 at Avonton Presbyterian Church. Anne served the Synod of Southwestern Ontario as the Area Education Consultant for almost 12 years. Anne diligently, and pleasantly, served in this position with a strong faith, a willingness to guide or sit back (whatever was needed), and a commitment to the WMS and The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

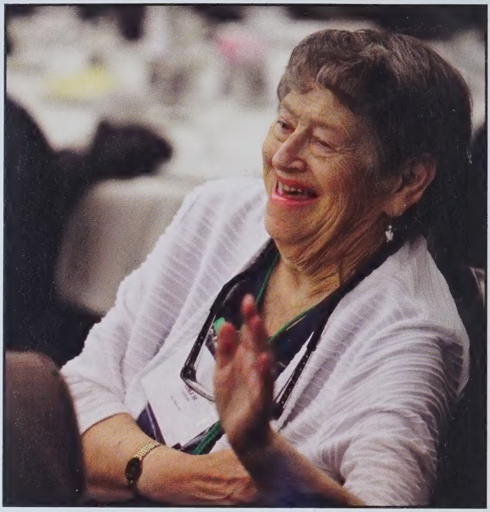
Synodical President, Shirley Aitcheson welcomed over 85 colleagues and friends to the event. Greetings were brought from WMS President, Joan Smith, and many others, including the Rev. Sarah Kim (WMS Executive Director), the Rev. Rick Fee (General Secretary of the Life and Mission Agency), Spencer Edwards and the Rev. Theresa McDonald-Lee (Regional Staff), the Rev. Henry Hubberts (St. Andrew's, Ancaster), and several Presbyterial Presidents.

Gifts were presented by the Synodical, WMS, and the Life and Mission Agency, and a lovely buffet of sweets, cheese, and crackers was served.

Anne thanked all present for a memorable retirement party. She looks forward to slowing her pace, and taking more holidays with her husband, the Rev. John Hibbs.

Although Anne has retired, she will continue to share her gifts by serving on the planning team for the 2014 Women's Gathering. She is also co-chair of the 2014 APCE annual event.

In Memoriam



Helen "Margaret" Befus passed away on Saturday, December 29, 2012, at the age of 74 years. Margaret was very involved with the Women's Missionary Society at all levels. She served on the National Council Executive and was active on many of the committees. At the WMS Council meetings she was always a willing volunteer at the registration table. She was also an active member of Varsity Acres Presbyterian Church and an Elder for the congregation. In addition, Margaret served on many committees for the Presbytery and for the Synod of Alberta, and was actively involved in Camp Kannawin as a camper, a director, registrar, and board member.

Margaret was born in Winnipeg, MB, and graduated from the University of Alberta in 1981 with her Bachelor of Education Degree. She taught in both Calgary and Edmonton. Margaret always looked out for children and was involved in Readers Theatre, Kiwanis Festival, bells choirs, Brownie leadership, CGIT leadership, church mentoring program, and the school safety patrol program.

Throughout her life, Margaret enjoyed camping in her trailer throughout Canada and the USA. She also enjoyed travelling to other countries, and holidays in Great Britain, various parts of continental Europe, Australia, and Japan. Right through the 2012 Grey Cup, Margaret was a vocal football fan, and loved her Calgary Stampeders.

Margaret is survived by her husband of forty-nine years, Glen Befus; her three daughters, Wendy (Colin) Bannerman, Heather (Bill) Kazimir, and Trish Befus; and three grandchildren, Justine Kazimir, Nathan Bannerman, and Jonathan Kazimir. As busy as Margaret was, she was also an advocate for her children and grandchildren and took great pride in all their achievements.

A funeral services was held at Varsity Acres Presbyterian Church on January 4, 2013.

In Remembrance

Katherine (Tena) Friesen
Elizabeth (Betty) Parker
Calvin Church,
Abbotsford BC

Jesse Ogilvie
Lillian Dickson WMS,
St. Andrews, Calgary AB

Margaret Befus
Varsity Acres Presbyterian
Women, Calgary AB

Marjorie Davidson
Athalie Read WMS,
St. Giles, Calgary AB

Phyllis Hanna
Dorothy McDonald
Grace WMS, Calgary AB

Adora McDittie
Forbes Presbyterian,
Grande Prairie AB

Karen Abbott
Rachel Scott
St. John's Presbyterian
Church, Grimsby ON

Marjorie Durnford
St. Andrew's WMS,
Guelph ON

Dorothy Sheppard
St. Andrew's Presbyterian
Church WMS, Kitchener ON

Julia Beck
New St. James WMS,
London ON

Nora Glover
St. Andrew's Presbyterian
Church, Mount Forest ON

Marion Mills
Richmond Hill WMS,
Richmond Hill ON

Mary T. Phillips
St. Andrew's Presbyterian
Women, Scarborough ON

Shirley Barnhart
St. Andrew's, Welland ON

Betty Worthington
Trinity Presbyterian
Church, York Mills ON

* * *

Mission Awareness Sunday

April 28, 2013

Theme: Missionaries 'R' Us

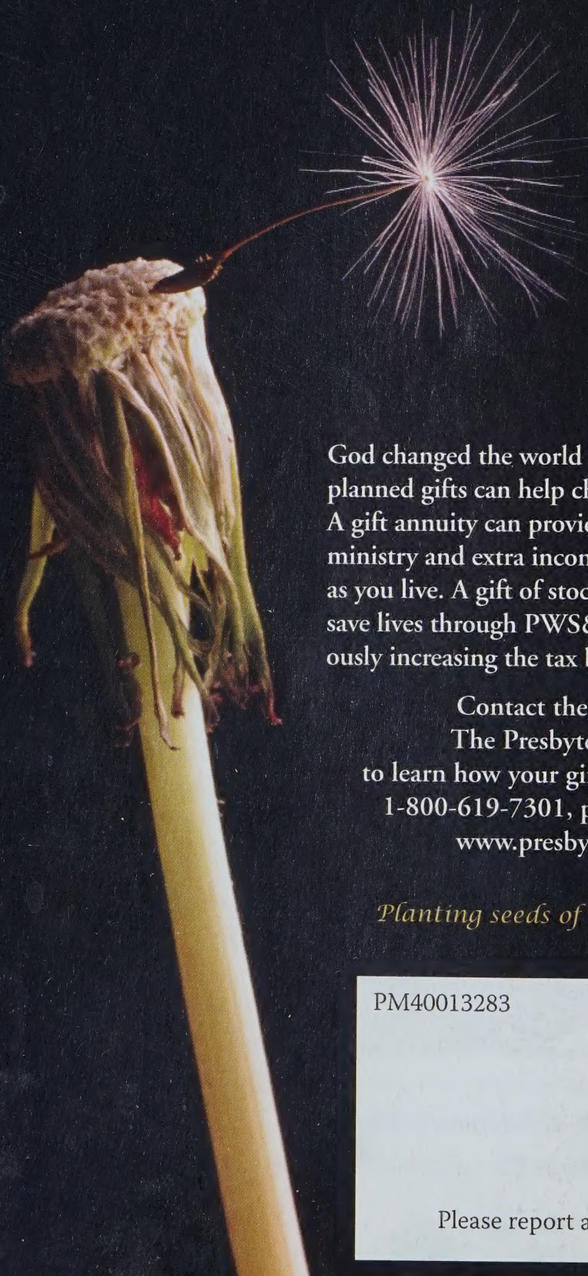
Scripture Readings: Isaiah 49:1–6; Matthew 9:35–38;
Psalm 85:8–13

Authors: Rev. Glenn and Mrs. Linda Inglis

A Change

The worship resource for Mission Awareness Sunday will not be mailed to WMS groups. You can get a copy of the litany, sermon, and children's story at www.wmspcc.ca/mission-awareness-sunday. A copy will also be emailed to those in our database. If you would like to receive an email, please contact amckeown@presbyterian.ca.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only son...



None of us leaves this life
without having given
everything away – to
someone, somewhere.

The only question for us is this:
to whom do we want to
bequeath the wealth God has
entrusted to us?

God changed the world through God's planned gift. Our planned gifts can help change the world, too.
A gift annuity can provide seed money for a new youth ministry and extra income for you and your spouse as long as you live. A gift of stock given directly to the church can save lives through PWS&D's relief work while simultaneously increasing the tax benefits to you.

Contact the Planned Giving Office,
The Presbyterian Church in Canada,
to learn how your gifts can make a lasting difference.
1-800-619-7301, plannedgiving@presbyterian.ca
www.presbyterian.ca/plannedgiving

Planting seeds of hope. For generations to come.

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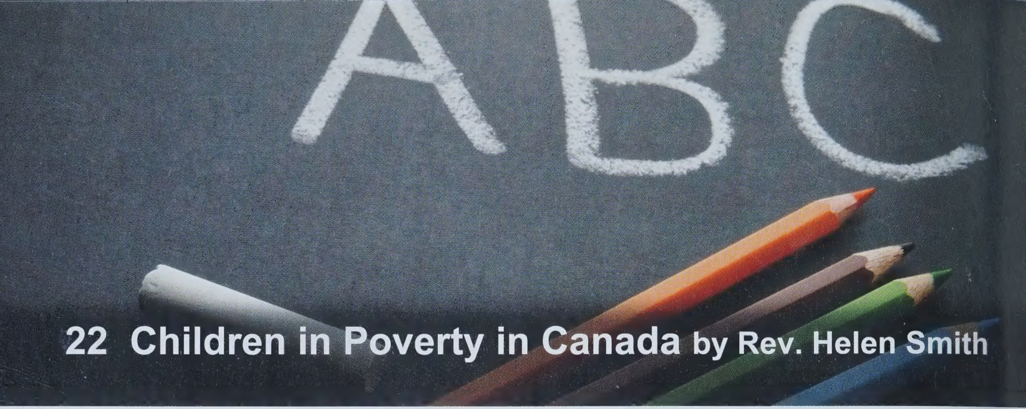
Glad Tidings

May/June 2013



22 Children in Poverty in Canada by Rev. Helen Smith

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Glad Tidings

May/June 2013

Volume 89, No. 3

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CIRCULATION: Alana Martin

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Glad Tidings reports on aspects of the Women's Missionary Society on all levels. *Glad Tidings* challenges concerned Christians to reflect on their faith through articles and reports related to mission and social justice issues, locally, nationally, and internationally. *Glad Tidings* through its content, encourages readers to become informed, educated, inspired, and motivated to action. *GladTidings* provides a forum for a broad spectrum of opinion and information, thus the views expressed in features, news reports, letters, and book reviews are not necessarily endorsed by the WMS or by the Editor.

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Editorial

I have done various things for Lent over the years and this year I was ready to try something different again. I signed up for a 12-session online retreat for moms called Caring For Your Soul. Not only was this my first online retreat (though I had previously completed an online course), it was also my first mom's retreat. Over 50 moms joined from across Canada and the United States at varying life stages. Many had young children at home, a few had teenagers, and a few even had adult children.

Over the course of four week, we received three email reflections a week. We received emails on caring for ourselves, our children, the things that matter, and our soul. There was even homework, which was the best part as we looked at the things that mattered to us, considered how we experienced God, and learned more about our personality type. Then we would gather, as our own time allowed, for online discussion and support. Over the course, I changed. I learned more about how I experienced God and learned to have less guilt about the things, "I should be doing in my Christian walk."

Sometimes it is a new life experience, such as becoming a mom that changes our perspective. This is what happened to Jacqui Foxall. After the birth of her daughter, experiencing the life-altering sacrifice of bringing new life into the world, her view of scripture expanded. She is now even more aware of the amazing, world-altering, sacrifice of Christ coming into this world.

May each of you be changed by God as you journey. Don't be afraid to try new things and don't be afraid to change as new things happen to you. And always remember that world changing moment when Christ sacrificed everything and came to earth.

The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood.

(John 1:14a, *The Message*)

Musings of a New Mom

by Jacqui Foxall

As I write this, I am blissfully enjoying a cup of tea—*while it's still hot*. A luxury I have come to truly appreciate since becoming a mom for the first time. Other "luxuries" I no longer take for granted are:

- Eating a meal while it's still hot (being able to use both hands to eat, and taking time to chew are also rare gifts).
- Keeping a shirt clean for a full day.
- Jumping in the car to run "quick" errands.
- A floor free of toys, Tupperware, or Cheerios.
- Taking a long hot shower (okay… just taking a shower, period).
- And, wearing anything "dressier" than yoga pants and a zip-up hoodie.

Yup. I'm a new mom.

Throughout my pregnancy, I meditated on Psalm 139. It excited me to consider how God was already intimately aware of our baby. We didn't even know if it was a boy or a girl, but God knew everything about her—and could see all of her days, her whole life laid out before her. For months, I reflected on the miracle of God knitting our baby together within me—a perfect arrangement of God's divine creativity, and my own blood and bones. (God may have taken a rib from Adam to make our foremother, Eve, but to create our children God uses every ounce of a woman's being.) As my energy supplies drained, I could feel myself becoming full—*overfull!*—with new life. By the time I reached the end of May, I didn't think I could be filled anymore with this "new thing" God was doing. I was ready to burst! I longed (impatiently) for release.

Until I became a mother, I don't think I truly grasped what it means to be emptied out, completely, ungrudgingly, for the sake of another. In Christian theology there is a term called *kenosis*, which comes from the Greek word κενόω (*kenóō*), "to empty out". Of the handful of times this verb is used in the New Testament, it is the passage within the Philippians 2 hymn which has spurred the greatest dialogue:

> *"Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.*
>
> *And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross."* (Philippians 2:5–8)

I had studied this passage while in seminary. I had preached it from the pulpit. A few pulpits. But until my transformation to motherhood, I don't think I understood how life-altering this degree of sacrifice can be.

The parallel to labour and delivery is obvious. I won't make you squeamish with the details, but suffice it to say that 18 hours after it began, labour ended with me feeling incredibly *kenotic*. Emptied out. Drained of energy, and life, and baby.

God has done a new thing in me — both terrifying and wonderful.

Beneath the glow of new motherhood, I felt like a shell of my previous self (and a little like my insides had been the battering ground of a civil war). Yet, as I gazed euphorically at my brand new baby girl, I gave thanks and prayed that God would continue this new thing in her, and in Matt and me, as we became a family together. (*Insert warm fuzzy glow*)

Fast forward three weeks: I still hadn't slept for more than two consecutive hours. Nursing was a disaster and our baby wasn't gaining sufficient weight (my persistence would land us in the breastfeeding clinic every few days for the next month; full success would take many more months to achieve). Thanks to the baby blues I couldn't make it through dinner without bursting into tears. To my dismay, I was still sporting maternity clothes—something I thought I would be done with by this point. And my baby screamed. A lot.

Books, blogs, good-natured friends, even well-meaning family members with a bottomless well of advice—nobody can prepare you for that feeling: that "new parent" feeling of exhaustion and desperation. Will this ever pass? Yes, of course it will. And it does. A routine eventually becomes apparent; your life eventually takes on a new rhythm. Baby learns life "on the outside" and even begins to master it. Now nine months after her arrival, our Acadia is happily tumbling through life—crawling, creeping, and climbing on everything. Her constant babbling makes me long for someone with the gift of interpretation of tongues. (I'm jealous that the cat might actually understand her.) Those days of desperation have passed, and our nights are filled with dreamy sleep for all three of us. And to her mother's joy, Acadia likes getting out and about as much as her mom does. It's as if all the dust that was kicked up in the first six months of our new life together has settled and now we can clearly see the outline of our new terrain.

But one thing has not resolved itself like some of those earlier challenges—that feeling of kenosis, of being emptied out. If anything, it has intensified. I look at my daughter and it occurs to me that on May 26, 2012, a part of me was emptied out forever. The author Elizabeth Stone said it perfectly, "The decision to have a child is momentous. *It is to decide forever to have your heart go walking around outside your body*." This is kenosis for me. While the physical trauma and wounds of childbirth have d it is

healed, I continue to feel vulnerable. A part of me has become primitive, wildly protective, and unabashedly selfless. My senses have become sharper, my reflexes faster. I feel part-superhero, part neurotic rookie. I am no longer myself, my old self. God has done a new thing in me—and it is both terrifying and wonderful. I look at my own mother with new eyes and utter to her over and over again those words which I'm sure are sweeter than honey: "I get it now Mom. I get it." And I thank her for a lifetime of sacrifices that I'm sure until now I took for granted.

When the time was right, Christ emptied himself and took on flesh. He walked among us, and showed us again who the Father was. His gospel was one of love and grace. It was risk, it was sacrifice. My experience of kenosis pales in comparison to Christ's own sacrifice, but it has opened my eyes to the depth of this pure selfless love. Love that would lay down its life even to the point of death. In hindsight, a part of me did die when Acadia was born. It had to so that this new pure love—a mother for her daughter—could take its first breath. And on those days when I am overwhelmed by the sight of my "outside" heart haphazardly tumbling across the floor, or giggling up the stairs, or searching curiously around a corner where I cannot see her any more, I take a moment and recall that I have been emptied in order to be filled up anew—as a mom, as one who has been called to guide a member of the next generation to know, "the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done" (Psalm 78:4, NRSV). I pray the hymn of Philippians 2, that the same mind that was in Christ might be in me—as Acadia's Mom. That through my life, my words, and deeds, she might come to know the goodness and mercy and grace of the God who knit her together, fearfully and wonderfully, in my womb. And once again, I feel full. Overflowing with grace, and peace.

My tea cup is empty. It's heat still warm in my belly. Baby Acadia's coos are coming through the monitor. Nap time is over. Soon I, in my yoga pants and hoodie, will be down on the floor playing and tumbling with my silly giggly girl. Completed errands and fancy clothes can wait for another day. These days with her are a luxury in themselves. A gift bursting with grace for which I will never stop giving thanks.

The Rev. Jacqui Foxall is Associate Minister at Knox Presbyterian Church in Oakville, and Executive Assistant (mother) to Acadia Kenzi Anne Foxall. (For play-dates, please call to book ahead. Bonus points if you bring a hot beverage!)

GARDEN of EATIN'

> Thus says the Lord of hosts … plant gardens and eat what they produce.
>
> Jeremiah 29:4–5

by Jessica Rhind

God must have a soft spot for gardens because he plonked Adam and Eve in the middle of one to live. Sure, it was His garden, but he shared it. Humans have subconsciously been trying to recreate ideal garden living ever since we left Eden because deep down we know our earthly existence is very interdependent on the natural relationships found within nature. Today, urban plots are the size of postage stamps—or just balcony windows—but most of us still recognize the yearning in our souls to get dirt under our nails, chat with worms, and come reaping time, enjoy the fruits of our labour.

As a happy home gardener, I often go to church (sometimes with boatloads of zucchini) and ponder the missional statement of love and servitude as it relates to farms and gardens. St. Andrews Presbyterian Church in Brampton, Ontario, hosts a Food Cupboard every Wednesday, and we service an average of 150 clients each week, about 1/3 of them with children. My extra produce (and those of other avid gardeners) finds a happy home every time—nothing goes to waste. I realize that fresh produce is a tricky thing to store so it is a special treat for those who are regulars at our Food Cupboard.

I have always helped out planting the church flower beds each year, and one year an idea sprouted while we were gearing up for the annual planting day. Our city church has a lawn—a big one. I had an extra rhubarb plant at home that I couldn't bear to kill. Could I bring it to the church? Wheels started turning, then spinning. There was an empty sunny spot along the church's chain link fence ...

Next thing I knew, I had permission from the property committee to put in a small vegetable garden at the side of the church. I had done my homework on site-planning and maintenance, the produce had a dedicated home, and I was willing to head up the project. The thing we worried about most with this 'front porch culture' was vandalism and tomato theft—I kid you not. In the end, we did it anyhow: I stood up in front of the congregation and proposed the plan, looking for help.

Give men the chance to build something for a good cause and they will come out in droves—with their own power tools—and happily build you an ark, a stable, anything really, and they will do it ten times better than what is required. I drew up a simple bed plan (4x12 foot beds for easy weeding), accepted a donation of wood for construction, the dirt came on the back of a truck, and over the course of one sweaty May afternoon, eight volunteers made two garden beds and furnished them with tender little greens, potatoes, herbs, and even strawberry plants.

Our first harvest was met with thanks from the Food Cupboard and suggestions for the following year on what went over well and what had failed (less potatoes, more hot peppers and lettuces, loved the cherry tomatoes, get the dwarf zucchini). The positive commentary by the congregation who passed by each Sunday was uplifting. The next year, a third garden bed was added, as well as a handy compost bin. The Sunday school classes were thrilled to sprout seeds for us in the windowsills, and several lucky seedlings made it out into the garden and grew into sturdy examples of interwoven relationships through Christ. Bet you thought they were just legumes.

All this is written with encouragement in mind. God inspires, but he won't do all the work for us; that is why we have hands, feet and brains, right? If dreams of ecclesial-based produce are floating through your head, here are some questions to ponder before you grab your garden spade, gloves, and hit an underground power line (oops!).

1. Is there enough internal support? A report to your church's governing body should be made to gain permission. Once given the green-thumbs up it is time to conscript happy volunteers.

> "God inspires, but he won't do all the work for us; that is why we have hands, feet and brains, right?"

Sunday school, property committee, mission committee, ask everyone, even if it is just for seed donations or an individual's time, truck, or drill-bit collection.

2. What are the God-driven goals for the garden? Does the food go to your own food cupboard or one in your community, a local school, a housing cooperative, or a shelter? Would you partner with another nearby church in taking care of it?
3. Are there people who will commit to planning and executing a garden project in the long term? Who has garden experience?
4. Where will materials come from? Who will pay for them? Who will build the beds? Who will plant and water the vegetables? Where will all the garden tools get stored? Who will harvest the produce? How will produce reach your recipients?
5. Can you meet the physical requirements for food production? Enough sunlight per day to grow, shelter from wind and vandals, access to water, and the space to put in a bed? Oh, and about those pesky underground cables … call before you dig. (Better yet, do raised garden beds and then no digging is required.)

Jessica Rhind is an active member of her church, volunteering in Mission and Junior Youth areas, and fully believes in the healing power of group gardening, the restorative feel of living soil under the fingernails, and the joy of eating sun-warm strawberries right off the plant. She can be found poking through the gardens on any given Sunday throughout the summer in heels and a skirt, ruthlessly yanking out errant weeds before service starts.

GOOD LUCK AND HAPPY GARDENING

ALTERNATIVES AND ADVICE

Before you think I just rained on your parade with all the details, let me offer some simpler alternatives and advice.

Container Gardens	Container gardens (this includes windowsills) and vertical gardens work for the space-challenged. You will never look at your church walls the same way again.
Herb Gardens	Many herbs are also pretty flowers so those who don't like the look of sprawling pumpkin vines on the church property can instead have a rosemary bush, a lavender and thyme hedge, and pots of fragrant mint, basil, oregano, or enjoy a whole host of biblical-referenced plants that you can use in salads, dry for tea, and enjoy the sight and smell of every time you walk by.
No One's Gardened Before?	Don't panic. The internet is full of articles on small-scale gardens. Also, investigate local garden groups, libraries, and magazines. The resources out there will drown you. The best and most practical ideas I have gathered are ones like square foot gardening, lasagna gardening, raised garden beds,
Start Small	If your experiment needs to be tweaked it is then feasible to make changes. Build on success, expand slowly, and get feedback. No sense in growing beets when the food cupboard needs lettuce.
Name Your Garden	Seriously. Go for something biblical, like Gethsemane, something catchy and cute, or choose something inspirational. Have a contest. Vote. Then make a sign, stake it where it can be seen and snap a photo of it.
Pray	This is your first and last job, so I put it here—last—so you will remember this most of all. Pray before you start this project to see if this is what God wants you to do right now. Pray with your congregation to help build an articulate plan, to light a fire in people for their support, and to see how it fits in with your outreach, Pray for the recipients of the garden produce. Pray for rain, for sun, for worms, for growth, for the harvest, and for the connection to the soil. Pray in thankfulness.

The WMS ... Did You Know?

Incoming WMS President, Betty Siverns

At our WMS Council meeting this May, Betty Siverns will become the new WMS President. I asked Betty to introduce herself and give a little information about her hope for the WMS:

I appreciate this opportunity to introduce myself to you as your new president.

I was Ontario born and raised and lived near and in Lindsay, ON, until my marriage to Ted. That was almost 56-years-ago and much has changed for me since then. Four children, ten grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren later, and after 14 moves, I find myself in British Columbia, with a husband who just can't seem to retire, a family scattered across the country, and a challenge ahead of me that tires me just thinking about it.

The WMS has been a part of my life for a long time. I attended WMS meetings during the early years after our marriage, and when we moved so Ted could pursue his education towards ordained ministry, I was presented with a life membership. Since then, I have been a part of many WMS groups, have been educated about mission work, been introduced to missionaries, and even had the opportunity to work at being a missionary myself. I have been blessed!

But all is not roses. My hair is grey, my hips ache, and my belt is too tight! I am getting old. And, I don't like it!

The WMS is getting old too —99 and counting. (At least I'm not that old!) The question is: Can the WMS be changed and made new? I think that with imagination, open minds, a lot of work, and of course, prayer, it can. While celebrating the past with joy and appreciation, we can work together to implement the plans we will be discussing at our annual Council meeting in May. What is born may not look like

continued on page 16

Love One Another

by Cheryl Steeper

There have been various articles written in the Glad Tidings over the years about multiculturalism—including some 'how to', so to speak, for problem solving, and embracing those different from us. Most of what is written is sound intellectual advice. But, we need the first step. Until we can honestly look at our own shortcomings, and admit to ourselves that we all play a part in the rising or falling of our nation, we cannot move forward to embrace the inevitable—namely a globalized world.

I like to think of myself as non-racist and open minded, although in all honesty, I have not always been that way. There have indeed been times when I have chosen to ignore my feelings of right versus wrong. As I see it, it is important to recognize and acknowledge those feelings. I must not let the negative ones gain a foothold. It is a known fact that unsettling thoughts and actions are born out of fear, and lack of trust. Mentally ask yourself, what am I afraid of, and why can I not trust this situation?

Always strive to do what would be pleasing in the eyes of God. Never lose sight of your faith—it is what will sustain you in your fear and doubt. As human beings, we weren't meant to be perfect. Don't spend your life searching for perfection, as you will never find it. You will spend precious time and energy on things that don't really matter. Taking that road will only destroy your soul, and hold you back from all that you were meant to be.

I urge individuals to consider which feels better, to lift one up in a positive way, or let one down. Violent thoughts and actions only beget violent thoughts and actions. Kind, considerate thoughts, beget the same. Be gentle. Be loving. Know that many immigrants have been persecuted, and some may lack trust because of this. They may not always be open to your kindness. Be kind anyway. A mere smile can speak volumes. Keep this momentum of kindness going. Be careful not to judge them, lest you yourself be judged. We are all equal in the sight of God, and by reaching out to those different from us, we are honouring God, as well as our multi-cultural neighbors.

This is not to say that change will happen overnight, and, if we do all the things mentioned, our world will be a perfect place in which to live. Always remember, God's greatest commandment is to love one another. Let us all make a conscious effort in that direction.

The trees of the Lord are well watered, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.

Psalm 104:16

Connecting to God's Creation

by Ishbel Dimson

When I was younger, flowers came in a bouquet. I appreciated the end result, but had no interest in growing them myself. Cutting out sod, tilling, and lugging bags of mulch and good soil was just too much trouble. If I planted some annuals in the Spring, they looked lovely until the weeds invaded the flower bed and grew and grew to twice the size of the flowers and finally choked them out. So I resorted to ground cover, but even then grass grew up in between the plants. I would go for a walk

and admire the beautiful gardens in my area. Some were manicured and looked like the colourful gardens you see in *Canadian Gardening* magazine.

One year, my friend invited me to Canada Blooms, a large Toronto garden and landscaping show. I marvelled at the landscapes—everything in its place, colour co-ordinated and planned so that there would be blooms from Spring through Fall. Flowers and bushes displayed in gracefully graduated levels from front to back. Someone had designed and labouriously followed a pattern that left me in awe.

Then I retired. With some extra time available (until people realize you're retired and you are inundated with volunteering requests), I decided to 'try my hand' at gardening. I actually found digging in the dirt to be very therapeutic. It truly was a positive influence on my well-being. I felt calm—any concerns I might have took a back seat to the task at hand, even though it was mindless. In life, my general approach is impulsive and passionate. At work, I would have all these creative ideas and I would rely on my people to point out all the steps that needed to be taken to make them work. So, you can imagine that without anyone to put things in proper perspective, the result of my gardening efforts.

I ended up with a plethora of annuals and perennials of various heights higgledy-piggledy over the flowerbeds. Although my garden may surrender to chaos, it gives me pleasure and, other than for a few tweaks, I have kept it this way. I call this end result my English garden. Every year, I'm surprised at what the birds and bees transplant and what survives the winter. When my perennials appear in the spring, it feels like old friends coming to visit. As I remove the leaves that have kept my garden warm during the winter, I marvel at the miracle of regeneration. A Master Gardiner I will never be. Names of some of the plants escape me, but I can tell you when they will bloom during the season and what colour they will be.

Since beginning gardening, I have become fascinated with the weather—the weather network is forever my reference. Before I started gardening I never thought much about the rain (other than its affect on my hair). There's nothing like listening to a shower and thinking how it is sinking in around your begonias. And, then there is the wind! How it strips my peonies of their velvety petals. It is

> "He makes grass grow for the cattle,
> and plants for man to cultivate—
> bringing forth food from the earth:"
>
> *Psalm 104:14*

"May the glory of the Lord endure forever; may the Lord rejoice in his works—he who looks at the earth, and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke. I will sing to the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. May my meditations be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the Lord."

Psalm 104:31–34

amazing how all of the things on this earth are intertwined and connected.

Gardening has taught me many things—most importantly, patience. I've often prayed to God for patience. It is a character trait that everyone wants to possess, but few want to develop. We want patience, but we want it right now. It is developed through delay and that happens with a garden—sometimes a flower or shrub does not bloom for a year or two, maybe more. Another virtue that one needs when gardening is perseverance. For some reason I cannot grow delphiniums. But every year I persevere and buy one and it's never to be seen again. I might never see the fulfillment of a tall, graceful delphinium in my flower beds, but I will keep on trying. Few of us have the luxury or discipline of hours of uninterrupted solitude with God. Gardening gives me that time to be reverent, to revel in a time of quiet meditation.

Sometimes the hardest part about gardening is making the time to appreciate the awesomeness of God's marvellous creation, to take that time on the patio or deck, and to drink in the beauty and thank God for the opportunity to be a partner in caring for it.

The WMS ... Did You Know?

continued from page 12

WMS. It may not work like WMS. It may not even quite be WMS, but something different. It will have to be different if it is to be appealing and meaningful to the next generation.

Just think about some of the possibilities: target groups, exciting projects, short-term commitments, and gatherings outside the church building; perhaps a lunch bunch gathering to share and learn—new ideas that ignite the spark and lights the fire in folk. We can all be a part of that spark that affects the whole church.

Are we willing to accept with Isaiah that God is "doing a new thing: now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"

Betty Siverns

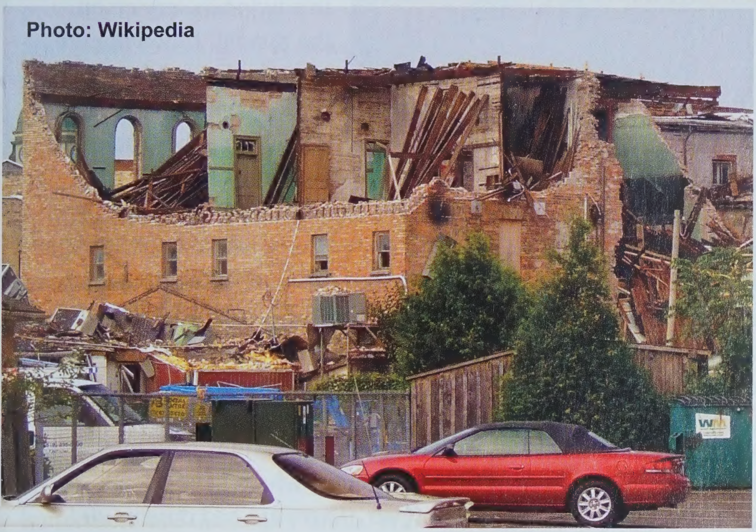


Photo: Wikipedia

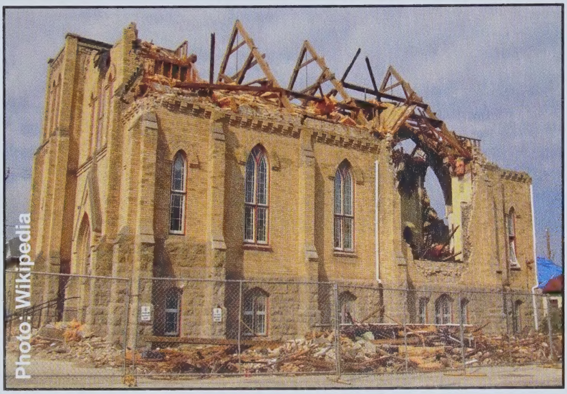
Severely damaged, historic brick buildings in downtown Goderich

This is the Day

by Mary Jane Bisset

As I sit writing this, I look outside at the world around, and see bare, stark trees, brown and muddy ground, and some snow, since the weather cannot decide whether to be cold or warm, snow or rain. I know that Spring will come and will bring with it green grass, buds, and leaves on the trees, flowers, and colour bursting forth. But right now, everything seems dark and dismal. Spring, and new life, comes only after a time that, for many, is dark, harsh, and full of seemingly unending greyness.

August 21, 2011, was a grey day for Goderich Ontario. On that day, we experienced an F3 tornado. I am told that this classification involves severe damage to human-built structures and vegetation, and winds within



The Victoria Street United Church in Goderich following the tornado

the tornado reaching upwards of 280 kilometres per hour. In Goderich, one man was killed, buildings and homes were destroyed, roofs and walls in ruins, and many, many trees were uprooted, all within the space of minutes. Indeed, we experienced a dark, harsh, and seemingly unending greyness in the summer of 2011.

But there is new life that comes out of the darkness. In the days that followed, the community came together in a way that was truly awesome. Church communities and individuals came together to provide dinners, night after night, for those in need, as well as those who arrived to work. Kind souls carried sandwiches and water up and down streets, offering comfort for the soul, and a bite for the body. Neighbour shared with neighbour. Workers from communities far and wide offered their expertise in opening roads up, clearing debris, and getting hydro up and running in near record time. And there was strength in the knowledge that Goderich had survived an F3.

The Goderich Ministerial came together in a worship service on the Sunday following the tornado that celebrated life, grieved the loss of life, and praised the God of all creation.

A year and a half later, there are still open spaces where once heritage buildings stood and great trees branched out. There are businesses which have not been rebuilt, some that will never rebuild in our community. There are families who still struggle. There are possessions, precious possessions, which have been lost forever. There are bad dreams and fears that rise when the wind starts to blow.

And there is change. Businesses have moved, and new businesses have come. Landmark houses are gone and new structures have appeared. There is less brick and more siding, new roofs and shiny windows. An historic church is no more and a new amalgamation is underway. Trees have been planted, still bare, stark trees, but the promise is there.

Spring follows Winter, and offers refreshment and renewal. We look forward to new growth. Buds burst forth on the trees. Flowers push their way up through the ground and offer us colour, beautiful colour. The grass grows and provides a wonderful green carpet spreading out around us. The rain washes away the sand and salt, and the bits of leaves left over from the Fall. The birds offer their songs of greeting in the morning. The scents and sounds and sights of newness and growth are all around.

New life! This is the season of new life. We have come through the season of Lent, a time of reflecting, of preparing for the events of Holy Week. We have experienced the excitement of the triumphal entry, the anger and sense of betrayal, the sorrow of loss and the bursting forth in song as we celebrate the resurrection and new life in Christ. We see the symbols of new life around us: eggs, baby chicks, butterflies, and the empty tomb. We are reminded once again of the power and the promise of God's great love for us.

So why am I talking about Spring and tornados and Easter? New life and change often come with a sense of sadness and loss. Changes have occurred in Goderich following the tornado. There are good things happening. New faces have appeared on The Square in our downtown area, as buildings go up and open for business. The landscape of the park in the centre of The Square is being shaped and designed to be pleasing and a place where people will want to be. I am not saying that we needed a disaster such as this in order for change to happen. I am saying that good can come out of disaster, that the changes that have occurred are a sign of life and renewal … out of the ashes. As we grieve for the loss of family homes and treasured possessions, great majestic trees, and part of the historic landscape of the town, we give thanks and remember. We also look ahead and celebrate, that as life goes on we continue to find joy.

Christ died that we might have life, great gifts coming from the death and resurrection of the greatest gift ever given. Look around you and celebrate the new life that is ours in Christ. Look around you and be thankful for all that we have. Look around you and rejoice that as Winter flows into Spring and as rubble is taken away and new structures go up, that God is always with us in the Good Friday and the Easter morning. Regardless of the Season, we are an Easter people. This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us give thanks and rejoice.

Spring follows Winter, and offers refreshment and renewal.

A Call to Prayer: Nigeria

by L. Walker, K. Masterton, and C. Scott

This edition's Call to Prayer comes to us from the International Affairs Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Please take a moment to learn more about the violence in northern Nigeria from their Time for Justice! resource and prayer for this challenging situation.

Violence in northern Nigeria

Many Christian and Muslim religious leaders are concerned about the increasingly dire situation in northern Nigeria linked to the extremist Muslim sect Boko Haram. The sect, whose name means "western learning is forbidden," is alleged to have assassinated several politicians and bombed police headquarters and United Nations offices in the Nigeria capital, Abuja. They are accused of attacking Christian churches in northern Nigeria.

Leaders in Christian and Muslim communities, including our partner, The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, have condemned the violence and called for communities to live together in peace.

The International Affairs Committee commends the "Statement on the Prevailing Situation in the Federal Republic of Nigeria" issued by the Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa meeting in Addis Ababa, January 8–13, 2012.

The moderator wrote to the general secretary of The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria assuring him of our prayers and support. Congregations were asked to pray for The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, for those supporting victims of violence and those working for peace.

Prayer for an end to violence in northern Nigeria

Leader: Great Peacemaker, your Son taught us that your love was meant for all people. We are made in your holy image—each woman, each man.

People: Teacher, we pray that all people have the freedom to seek Christ in their neighbhour—regardless of their gender, nationality, ethnicity or race, language or religion. As Jesus reconciled us to you, so let us be reconciled to each other.

Leader: Give us tender hearts. Shake us out of indifference so that we are ashamed by the atrocity of war and violence.

People: Give us courage and strength to be peacemakers in our homes and communities.

Leader: We pray for the safety and wellbeing of members our partner church, The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria and for all victims of conflict. We pray for the strength and courage of peacemakers in situations of violence.

All: We pray that all people in Nigeria may live without fear of violence or persecution. Amen.

Time for Justice! is based on the report of the International Affairs Committee to the 138th General Assembly, June 2012 (A&P 2012). Please use Time for Justice! as a Minute for Mission, bulletin insert or newsletter article to inform members of the international concerns of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Thank you for your prayerful consideration of these matters.

Circulation Reminder

Remember, that *Glad Tidings* is not just for WMS members! Consider buying a subscription for your minister, a Presbyterian women who does not attend the WMS, your church librarian, or the chair of your mission committee. And ... you don't need to wait until the Fall to subscribe. Subscribe today by contacting Alana Martin at 416-411-111, 800-619-7301 or amartin@presbyterian.ca.

Children in Poverty in Canada

Education

by Rev. Helen Smith

Mission Study

This is the last of four mission studies looking at Children in Poverty in Canada. The previous sessions were:

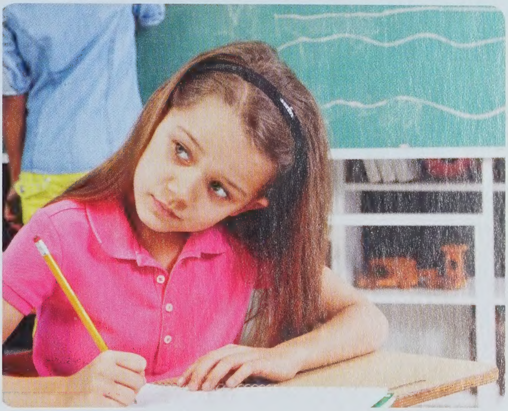
- **Becoming Aware of the Canadian Situation** in the July–August 2012 edition
- **Food Security** in the September–October 2012 edition
- **Housing** in the January–February 2013 edition

Opening Reflection

Greenless Child
I watched her go uncelebrated into the second grade,
A greenless child,
Gray among the orange and yellow,
Attached too much to corners and to other people's sunshine.
She colours the rainbow brown
And leaves balloons unopened in their packages.
Oh, who will touch this greenless child?
Who will plant alleluias in her heart
And send her dancing into all the colours of God?
Or will she be left like an unwrapped package on the kitchen table—
Too dull for anyone to take the trouble?
Does God think we're her keeper?

Ann Weems, Reaching for Rainbows, p. 33

Biblical Reflection



Proverbs is part of the wisdom literature in the Bible. It is a collection of moral and religious teachings in the form of sayings and proverbs. Solomon is the most prominent of the authors and the introduction of the book is attributed to him. He begins singing the praises of what one can gain by learning through his proverbs.

Read Proverbs 1:1–6
- What are some of the things one can gain through Solomon's teachings?
- What do we see as the benefits of education today?

Read Matthew 18:1–6
- How does Jesus feel about children?
- How does Jesus feel about those who put stumbling blocks in the way of these little ones?
- With regard to education, what are some stumbling blocks we can put before children?

Sing or read the words: Book of Praise #519, Jesus, friend so kind and gentle

Children in poverty and education

It is common knowledge that households with higher education levels have more financial security. Higher education is associated with higher earnings: In 2000, those who completed their education with a high school diploma earned on average $4,300 more than those without a high school diploma. Education beyond high school offered an even greater earning benefit. A trades

> The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you will go.
>
> Dr. Seuss

or college graduate earned $7,200 more than a high school graduate and a university graduate had earnings nearly double that of a high school graduate. Canadians with a post-secondary education also enjoy higher earnings growth over their careers, lower unemployment risks, and higher net assets—all of which contributes to financial security, where income is sufficient to meet the basic needs of a family.[i]

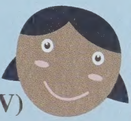
While education can improve one's financial situation, the "Catch 22" is that living in poverty puts up obstacles to education. Low income families move a lot and students must change schools. Transportation can be a problem. There is stigma to battle. There is no money for pizza day or extracurricular sports. Even school fees can be a challenge to pay. School supplies are expensive. A 1989 report of the Canadian Teacher's Federation found that many low-income children experience reduced motivation to learn, delayed cognitive development, lower career aspirations, interrupted school attendance, lower university attendance, and higher dropout rates.[ii] Children from low income families struggle with low self-esteem, low confidence, and little hope.

To think about

- Do you know what the school fees are in your community? Is there a way in which these can be alleviated for low income families?
- Many communities have mentoring programs where a volunteer and student meet for an hour once a week at the child's school during the school year. Having a positive adult role model, who creates an environment of sharing, caring, and trust can greatly help a child's self-esteem. Does your community have such a program?

Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life.

Proverbs 4:13 (NRSV)



> **When schools flourish, all flourishes.**
> **Martin Luther**

Would that be something in which you could get involved?

- Other schools are always looking for adult volunteers who can come in to the classroom and read with the children or help out in other ways.
- In late Summer, your group may want to provide back packs and school supplies for families with low incomes.

Early Intervention

It begins in the early years. Families with limited financial resources are less likely to negotiate through life such that they provide stimulating experiences for their children. Low income is a stressor that can drain a parent of energy. Speech therapists, language specialists, dental care, and eye care are beyond the means of the family. A Statistics Canada study published in November 2006, looking at a five year old child's readiness to learn on the basis of gender, level of household income, and a child's home environment concluded that children from lower income families were less ready to learn than children from more affluent households.

Early intervention programs can help prepare children from lower income families for the regular school system.[iii]

Vivian McCaffrey, Executive Assistant, Government Relations, Elementary Teacher's Federation of Ontario, cites the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development in this regard: "International research from a wide range of countries shows that early intervention contributes significantly to putting children from low-income families on the path to development and success in school."[iv]

There are programs that are making a difference. In the early 1980's a group of downtown churches in Calgary got together and formed the Calgary Urban Project Society (CUPS) to provide referral services and basic medical care to those arriving at their doors in search of help. In 2002, as part of

their work to address the root causes of poverty, CUPS expanded its range of services opening the One World Child Development Centre for children ages 3–6. One World is an early intervention education centre, operating with the philosophy of providing a nurturing, caring, educational environment to help low-income children, and families reach their full potential. The learning team consists of parents, classroom teachers, educational assistants, and a team of consultants that includes a psychologist, speech and language pathologist, art therapist, physical therapist, and pediatrician.

The children are bussed to the Centre. This assures consistent attendance. The school day starts at 10 a.m. with a hot breakfast. Lunch and an afternoon snack are also part of the day. On the day that I visit, the children are in the gym, enjoying a game of duck, duck, goose, which I observe through one way glass. Time is spent at various centres of their choice, in circle time as a class, and outside on the playground.

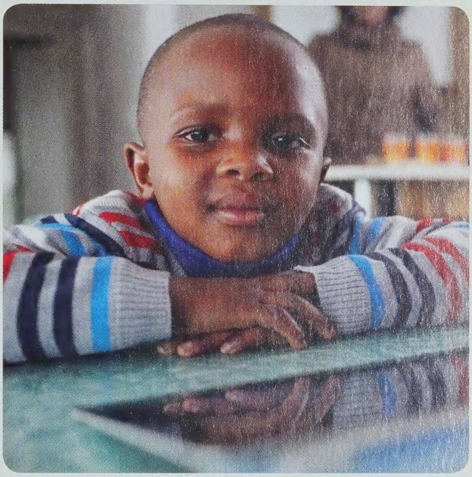
The Centre looks at the family as a whole and provides programs for parents on nurturing parenting. On Fridays, when there are no classes, the buses are used to take families to an Anglican church which provides child care and

First Nations and Education

Shannen's Dream

In 1979, 50,000 gallons of diesel oil began to leak under the J R Nakogee School in Attawapiskat. Children and teachers started to get sick. In 2000, the leak was discovered by the Education Authority. The school was closed and torn down. The federal government provided portables and began plans for a new school. Shifting ground jammed windows and emergency doors and created gaps in the doorframes in the portables. They were infested with mice. Classrooms were overcrowded. From 2000 to 2007, three different Ministers of Indian Affairs a community kitchen program for the parents. Everyone eats lunch together, and prepares meals that they can take home. All of this helps build parental and caregiver capacity for sustained results.

Studies have shown that this type of intervention does make a difference with regard to academic readiness when the children graduate to the regular school system. But the need for intervention does not stop at age six. Support is still needed. Sabine Harris, part of the Administrative Team at One World, speaks of the need to have more Learning Resource Teachers in the regular school system, and counsellors who can connect the children to resources in the community.



To think about

- Does your community have any early intervention programs? Are they looking for volunteers? Can you partner with them as the Anglican Church did with the community kitchen?
- How many Learning Resource Teachers are in your school board area? If you feel this is not sufficient, start a movement to increase the numbers.

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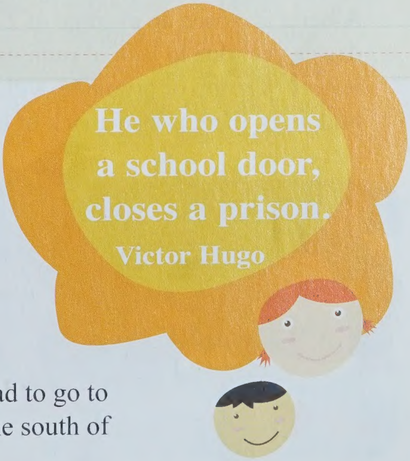
promised to build a new school. In December 2007, a fourth Minister cancelled the plans.

The Grade eight class, in 2008, cancelled their trip to Niagara Falls and instead sent three students to Ottawa to talk to the Minister. They were turned down. One of those students was thirteen year old Shannen Koostachin. Shannen wanted to become a lawyer, which meant she had to go to high school in Timmins, hundreds of miles to the south of



> **He who opens a school door, closes a prison.**
> **Victor Hugo**

her home. Tragically, while there, she died in a car accident, at the age of fifteen. She spearheaded a campaign, now known as "Shannen's Dream," calling for "safe and comfy schools and culturally based education" for First Nations students.[v]

There is still much work to be done to bring this dream into a reality. On average, First Nations schools receive $2,000–$3,000 less funding per student than provincially run schools.[vi] The 2011 Report of the Auditor General concludes that Indian and Northern Affairs Canada's efforts to address the education gap between First Nations and non-Indigenous Canadians has not made progress.[vii]

Some schools lack proper heating or have black mould. At times they must close due to lack of running water. Lake St. Martin First Nation Reserve School in Manitoba has been closed due to an infestation of snakes and also by flooding. The Lubicon First Nation School in Little Buffalo, Alberta is closed an average of 22 days a year due to lack of running water.[viii] On top of problems with buildings, there is also a lack of basic supplies and culturally appropriate curriculum. Many students lose hope and drop out as early as grade five. "The proportion of high school graduates over the age of 15 is 41% among First Nations members living on reserves, compared with 77% for Canadians as a whole..."[ix]

In February, 2012, the House of Commons voted 268 to 0 to put First Nations Schools on an equal footing with provincial schools. The Shannen's Dream Campaign, schools, and churches across Canada are anxiously waiting and watching for the government to implement the motion, with additional funds for First Nation's education. An October report from the Government has the money spent on Aboriginal education on par with provincial schools, but that included the money spent on off reserve education. On reserve schools are still underfunded.

A Senate report put forth in December 2011 advocated creating a native education system, with native school boards that, with the help of provincial governments, would pool resources, set standards, and adopt

a common curriculum that teaches native language and culture along with math, science, and language arts. This model is used successfully in Nova Scotia. In October 2012, this idea was rejected by the Assembly of First Nations because they believed Ottawa was going to unilaterally create legislation that did not properly consult chiefs and other First Nations leaders, and that would be a top-down approach that would not take into account the unique needs in different parts of the country. They felt too much was happening behind closed doors.

To think about

- Why do you think the Assembly of First Nations is cautious when negotiating with the government on matters concerning education?
- Let the government know you are watching and waiting for them to implement the February 2012 motion with regard to funding of First Nations Schools.
- Pray for transparency in all negotiations between the Federal Government and the Assembly of First Nations.

Additional Opportunities for Mission

Winnipeg Inner City Mission (www.wicm.ca), a Presbyterian organization is committed to serving Aboriginal individuals and families in the inner city. WICM's mandate is to help provide a safe, nurturing and peaceful atmosphere in which people can begin to achieve their potential. They have a computer lab for youth, and an after school program for children. Evangel Hall Mission in Toronto (www.evangelhall.ca) has several programs designed to help young people succeed in school and in life by removing financial barriers and providing access to resources and enriching experiences. These include Homework Club with volunteer tutors, Breakfast Club, and Transit for Teens. Transit for Teens supports dozens of high school students each year with transit tickets, attendance monitoring, academic counselling, and access to free tutoring and other resources. Last year all of the graduating students went on to post-secondary education. Flemingdon Gateway Mission After School Programme (flemgatemission.com) has homework club, sports and arts programmes, and leadership training.

Contact Evangel Hall Mission and Flemington Gateway Mission in Toronto or Winnipeg Inner City Mission and find out how you can help with their education programs. These missions are supported by Presbyterians Sharing and the WMS, or you can support them directly.

> Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe in your commandments.
>
> ~Psalm 119:66 (NRSV)

Benediction

Go forth thirsting to drink from God's cup.
Hear the cries of our brothers and sisters.
See the invisible members of our communities.
Feel deeply, the Spirit of God moving powerfully in every part of life, and in every human being.
Walk with those who struggle and falter, knowing that God is walking with each of us as well.
Audaciously proclaim that God's good news is for all people.
Advocate with conviction for change that will make a difference in the lives of vulnerable people.
Be transformed by God's abundant love as it is reflected in vulnerable people.
Thanks be to God. Amen

Justice Ministries
The Presbyterian Church in Canada

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[i] "What difference does learning make to financial security", Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Well-being, Special Reports, www4.hrsdc.gc.ca.

[ii] Supporting Education...Building Canada: Child Poverty and Schools, Canadian Teachers Federation, 2009, p.2.

[iii] "Readiness to learn at school among five year old children", Statistics Canada, November 2006, www.statcan.gc.ca.

[iv] McCaffrey, V. (2008, June). "Full-day kindergarten: A boost for children living in poverty." ETFO Voice, 10(5), pp. 14–16.

[v] http://www.fncfs.com/shannensdream/

[vi] Michael Mendelson, Improving Education on Reserves: A First Nations Authority Act. Caledon Institute of Social Policy. 2008 p. 6. Full text available here: www.caledoninst.org/Publications/PDF/684ENG.pdf

[vii] 2011 June Status Report of the Auditor General of Canada. Preface to Chapter 4.

[viii] Honouring the Children: Shadow Report, Canada 3rd and 4th Periodic Report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, October 24, 2011, First Nations Child and Family Caring society of Canada and KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, p. 6.

[ix] 2011 June Status Report of the Auditor General of Canada. Op.cit.

Together with partners overseas and generous supporters here at home, we can respond to the root causes of poverty and create positive change around the world.

Please help continue this important work today! Contribute to PWS&D by making a one-time donation or becoming a monthly donor. Monthly giving is easy for you and means PWS&D partners can depend on consistent support. Your sustaining donation makes a difference!

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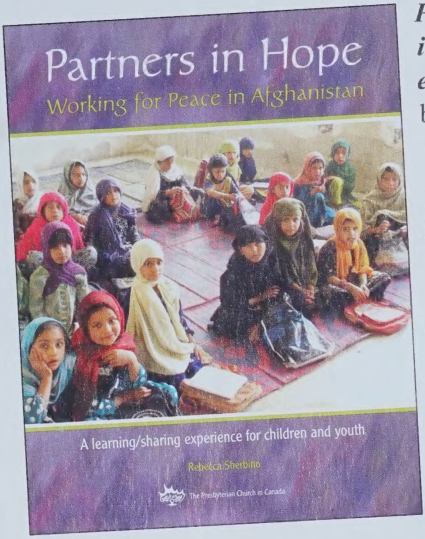
Our Next Study

This month includes the last of our studies on Children in Poverty in Canada by the Rev. Helen Smith. A special thank you goes out to Helen for her excellent work on these four studies.

Beginning in the July August 2013 edition of *Glad Tidings*, we will begin our next study, Maternal Health. We will begin with an introduction to maternal health and its importance to the wellbeing of children, women, and entire families. The following three studies will include Maternal Health in Malawi, Maternal Health in Afghanistan, and Maternal Health among Canada's Aboriginal Peoples.

Book Reviews

reviewed by Colleen Wood


Partners in Hope
Working for Peace in Afghanistan
A learning/sharing experience for children and youth
Rebecca Sherbino
The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Partners in Hope, Working for Peace in Afghanistan: A learning/sharing experience for children and youth
by Rebecca Sherbino

For those that are familiar with The Presbyterian Church in Canada's Partners study, this is the newest addition. This study gives a short overview on Afghanistan and a great overview of our PCC involvement in Afghanistan for children and youth.

The study contain five, 60-90 minute sessions. Each session begins and ends with a prayer, and then contains a variety of activities—games, questions (children being allowed to ask their questions, and some asked by the leader), internet learning, stories, a Bible study, and a craft. An Afghanistan board game is also included to reinforce the learning. Although it is suggested the study can be used with children as young as six, I think the ideal age would be a little older, perhaps 8-12, especially due to the amount of excellent factual information on Afghanistan.

As part of the study, groups are encouraged to raise funds for work in Afghanistan. Just $6 provides a child with school supplies and a school bag. For $120, you group can provide education for a girl in Afghanistan for an entire year!

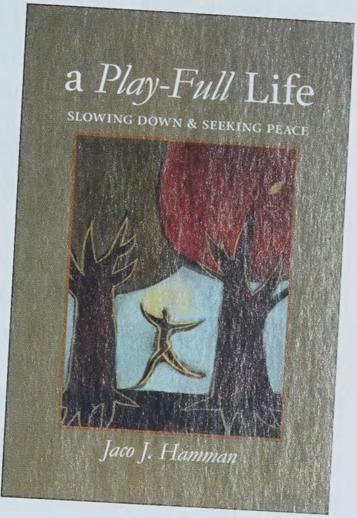
In the past, congregations have used these studies in their Sunday schools, during afterschool programs, or as their Vacation Bible Camp curriculum. Occasionally, WMS groups have even used some of the materials from the children's studies in their meetings.

The study is available for purchase from The Book Room or can be downloaded from the national church website (www.presbyterian.ca).

A Play-Full Life, Slowing Down and Seeking Peace
by Jaco J. Hamman

I like to play, though I am finding as I get older my play is becoming more structured. I am not sure how this happened because I had a great example of a father who played right through his senior years as a magician, joke teller, and ventriloquist—not to mention wearer of silly hats.

For me, this book was a great reminder of the importance of play. I was engaged right from the introduction when he says, "I smelled God." He goes on to say, "God smells like a pine forest freshly washed by a torrential thunderstorm." The book continued to engage me as Hamman compared play (now often play comes at a cost) to the simplicity of play-full. We have all met people who are filled with such a play-full nature, and I think many of us want a little of what they have. And being play-full is about so much more than just fun. It is about balance. It is about being healthy so we can have positive relationships, so that we can then provide stability to our children. It is about putting our vocation into perspective.

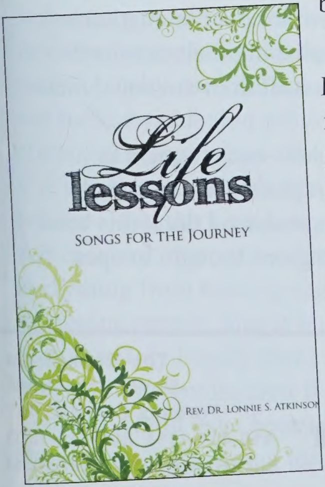


This book has a nice combination of information, personal reflection, and lots of practical suggestions. As someone who likes to control, this book provides lots of good reasons to enjoy life more, be less anxious, to play, and to engage others and the world in a more play-full lifestyle. And maybe, just maybe, I'll wear a fun hat while I am doing it!

Jessie

Life Lessons, Songs for the Journey

by Lonnie S. Atkinson

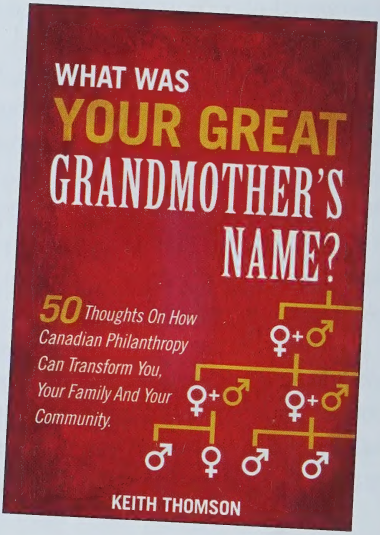


This books contains 52 mediations by the Rev. Dr. Lonnie Atkinson, minister of St. Paul's Presbyterian in Ingersoll, Ontario. Atkinson, in addition to being a pastoral minister, is a spiritual director and counsellor, leadership consultant, and singer/songwriter. Each reflection includes a poem or song, and a reflection. The one thing that I did find missing from these reflections was a specific Biblical passage. Although the reflections do focus on Bible language and truths, a specific Bible passage is not mentioned. However, this might present you with an opportunity by pulling out your Bible concordance and looking for a passage that speaks to you, and to the reflection.

These devotions could be used in your own daily personal reflection time, or even be used at meetings for the devotional. Some of the songs that are included can even be sung to familiar tunes making them great for worship times.

What Was Your Great Grandmother's Name
50 Thoughts on How Canadian Philanthropy can Transform You, Your Family, and you Community

by Keith Thomson


WHAT WAS
YOUR GREAT
GRANDMOTHER'S
NAME?
50 Thoughts On How Canadian Philanthropy Can Transform You, Your Family And Your Community.
KEITH THOMSON

Most of us do not think of ourselves as philanthropists. Yes, we give to charity, but we think of philanthropists as large gift donors, those that see their names at the top of donation boards. In reality, a philanthropist is almost anyone who gives of their time or money to help others.

In the introduction of this book we read, "With this book you now have available 50 simple, easy and encouraging reminders of why and how we give." Indeed, this book includes 50 sometimes quirky, sometimes educational, sometimes even slightly contradictory thoughts on giving. There are certainly lots of engaging facts, such as the fact that "12 percent of our economically active population" are involved in the philanthropic sector. Thomson also gives us some good questions to ask when we consider where we put our charitable givings, such as how effective is the charity in accomplishing their mission? The book also has some good reminders such as more stuff does not equal more happiness.

The format of this book makes it very simple to read—each thought is contained on a two-page spread with just a few paragraphs and an engaging photo with it. There are also many stories used as illustrations. I think this book might be best used with a stewardship committee, using one thought to open each meeting.

WMS PCC
THE Book Room

The Book Room
50 Wynford Drive,
Toronto, ON M3C 1J7
416-441-1111 800-619-7301
bookroom@presbyterian.ca

Todd Statham
Malawi

Long Walks and Long Waits

It might have been the Holy Family that I saw. Just after Christmas, our family was driving through one of the many villages lining the highway. Through my driver's side window these villages look all alike: thatched huts, a few stalls selling fresh vegetables and old chickens, a one-roomed store crammed with everything and nothing, kids kicking a homemade ball around a field of dust or mud (depending on the season). Nothing to make me take notice of anything in particular.

Then I thought I saw Joseph, Mary, and the baby Jesus. The man was pedaling an old bicycle, wobbling up the shoulder of the road. His wife was sitting over the back fender, her arms wrapped tight around his waist. A baby was fast asleep on her back, swaddled in a colourful chitenge (a large piece of cloth). Now if it's true—as Malawian friends tell me—that the bicycle is southern Africa's real beast of burden, used for everything from hauling sugarcane to moving people, then it might have been the Holy Family that I saw. Maybe they were on their flight to Egypt? It could have been them. But truth is, I was going too fast to get a second look. Our land cruiser roared past them at 90 km an hour, our tailwind shuddering his bike, and flapping her chitenge.

I've realized of late that I move too fast for this country. Malawi moves slow. As in six km an hour slow, the average walking speed. The tourist brochures and guidebooks like to sell this speed as Malawi's "relaxed" and "laidback" ethos. Let's face it: it's mostly just because people here are poor.

True, some folks own bikes and a very few have cars, but most walk. So Malawians move slow, especially when one leaves the urban areas for the countryside, where the vast majority of people live. Here, a lot of folks still measure time by sun and seasons and not the hands of a clock. Here, the smell of wood smoke from a hundred thousand fires wraps the hills and settles in the valleys. The Ghanaian theologian, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, observes: "One really ought to say that there is no life without smoke in Africa." There's nothing romantic about this image like it might be for Canada, where the scent of wood smoke evokes Summertime barbecues or crisp Autumn evenings. Here, smoke smells like poverty: 85% of the population uses wood or charcoal for energy. Here, food cooks slow over the fire. And food only gets

cooked after women have laboured long, gathering sticks from the bush and hauling water from creeks or bore-holes in buckets balanced precariously on their heads.

Sometimes Malawi forces even us Canadians to slow down to walking speed! Annika and I just dug out the car after it got stuck in the thick mud left behind from the rains. Heavy rains have washed out the road leading to our house.

Yes, the cities are sprawling from growth and more and more people have cellphones and bankcards, but Malawi remains largely rural, overwhelmingly poor, and very slow. Folks have to wait long to get what they need, whether its medicine at the hospital or fertilizer for their fields.

And they have to walk long to get where they need to go. This country moves along at six km an hour, but I hurtle through it at 90 km an hour. Of course I'm making attempts to get to know Malawi and its people, from studying Chichewa to reading books on traditional Malawian culture to asking lots of questions of Malawian colleagues and friends. But I still move too fast: a high-speed, high-tech, high-stress, errand 'running', hurry-up 'Westerner' in the land of long walks and long waits. It leaves me wondering how much I'll ever really know of this place.

I'm coming to realize of late that my upbringing in the so-called 'West' may have left me too fast for God. Because God, like Malawi, moves slow. This is a frustrating fact of the Bible. It seems that God takes his time to do anything important. He could have made the world in seven seconds; instead, he took seven whole days. He made Abraham and Sarah wait decades on his promise of a child. He let his people suffer as slaves in Egypt for many years before he brought them to the Promised Land. And before they got there, God moved the people of Israel through the desert at six km an hour for forty years. He leaves the Psalmist languishing so long that the poor man cries out: "How long, O Lord, how long?" We "hurry-up" Canadians typically skip over the tedious opening chapter of a gospel like Matthew which chronicles generation after generation after generation after generation after generation living and dying before Jesus Christ finally arrives. God has a plan of salvation—it plays out in slow motion though, and despite Christ's assurance that, "behold, I am coming soon," Christians are still waiting to see it finished! God moves slow. Sometimes even six km an hour slow.

Can our supersonic, twittering, high-speed internet, fast food culture bear with a God of long walks and long waits? I was thinking about this when I serendipitously came across a book in the library of Zomba Theological College written by Kosuke Koyama, a Japanese missionary in rural Thailand. Like me, Koyama suffered major culture shock as a missionary. He had left his 'skyscrapered' and 'Sony-ed' homeland to work among Thai farmers in their rice-paddies and mango plantations. The culture shock left him pondering why it was that God, according to the Bible, typically moves as slow as the farmers' plodding water buffaloes. He concluded that if God is love, as the Bible says, he is with people for the long haul. Koyama wrote: "The Word of God communicates the love of God. The love of God means God's resolve to love men, though it may call for supreme sacrifice on his behalf and even when such sacrifice is implemented by 'inconvenient' and 'inefficient' processes. Since God is love, he always prepared to operate in history inefficiently. God's love proves its genuineness by working its way through history without magic formula, easy quick fixes or technologically efficient ways" (*Waterbuffalo Theology*, p. 65).

It's something to think about ... if you have the time.

Denise Van Wissen
Nicaragua

Reflecting on the past year, it has been a busy one with my work with SOYNICA. Above and beyond our usual work here at SOYNICA, we devoted many days and weeks

Overseas Staff Birthdays

May

26 – Pauline Brown, India

June

1 – Louise Gamble, Taiwan

July

2 – Juan Diego Van Wissen-Zuniga, Nicaragua

11 – Jeremy Alexander Van Wissen-Zuniga, Nicaragua

throughout the year to the challenging task of developing our strategic plan for 2013–2017. In 2013, we'll enter a period of transition to a 'team leadership' model, and an American volunteer has joined us to assist with this process. I'm working with her in exploring new funding possibilities.

I also took a more active role in 2012 as SOYNICA's representative to the Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO) World Food Day organization committee. This committee meets regularly in the second semester each year to plan all the commemorative events and activities taking place over several weeks. At the main event, a two-day Market Fair, we shared space with our network to end hunger, 'Alianza Gallo Pinto' and offered free samples of Nicaragua's daily fare of '*gallo pinto*' (rice mixed with fried red beans) and fresh tortillas, to promote the cause.

May was also busy, as visits from the Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB) and PWS&D came back-to-back. Five years ago, we successfully hosted a CFGB Food Study Tour here in Nicaragua. This time, along with PCUSA missionary Doug Orbaker of CEPAD, we welcomed a group of young people representing most of the CFGB partner churches. I assisted the youth and their leader with a 'simulation' exercise in the 'field,' which consisted of comparing prices of basic foodstuffs in both the market and a grocery store, with minimum wages. As hoped, this exercise provoked much discussion and I emphasized that the gaping difference in percentage of incomes spent on food (people in countries of the Global South spend up to 45% on food, while Canadians spend about 10%) has significant implications for household food security.

After the CFGB visit, I had the pleasure of serving as interpreter for PWS&D committee member Sarah Travis. Accompanying these monitoring trips is always a rich learning experience, through observing the work of other PCC partner organizations and the PWS&D staff's interaction with them.

As a family, we had so much for which to be thankful in 2012, including a Summer vacation in Canada, during which we enjoyed a special visit of dear Presbyterian friends all the way from Calgary.

Since a prolonged heat wave maintained temperatures almost as hot as Nicaragua's, we felt at home in Canada! We also celebrated the boys' July birthdays (Jeremy turned 4, and Diego 2) while there. Jeremy started 2nd level at his preschool in September, accompanied for the first time by his little brother. We're thankful that Nelson continued to have steady work this year. The biggest news of all, is that, *!Gracias a Dios!* (Praise God!) we were able to buy a house here in Managua. The boys (and dog) are thrilled with the outdoor space, and are happy that we remain close to their grandparents' place.

Updates from The Cariboo Presbyterian Church

(Excerpts from Northern Light newsletter)

From the Southern Cariboo

We gathered on a Saturday in early February for our House Church Rendezvous. Members from house churches in Sheridan Lake, Bridge Lake, Canim Lake, 100 Mile House, Lac La Hache, Williams Lake, Springhouse Ranch, Fox Mountain, McLeese Lake, Quesnel, and Nazko—over 150 in total—joined for a great night of music, sharing, worship, and dinner.

As much fun as the night was, the house church rendezvous is not what we are fundamentally about. We are about little house churches gathering weekly to worship, pray, and share a meal, and it is precious. We are about what comes out of these gatherings—a member staying with a cowboy who is dying and then weeps with his widow; another member volunteering hours with children in the community; and another standing with a neighbour who has been abused. We could write a book about what happens in, and outside, these house churches and we don't know the half of it.

From the North Cariboo

We talk a lot about faithfulness in the mission in the Cariboo. God does not call us simply to show results of our works, but more importantly, to be faithful. When we don't see 'tangible' results it can be discouraging, but we are called to faithfulness. In the past year, we have held onto that truth as we have seen house churches become smaller in numbers. People have moved away and others have been in poor health. However, we continue to live out the love of Christ in our small, remote communities.

And, we have some exciting new ministries. We have "Circle of Hope" that offers a safe place for those to share, pray, and sing in Quesnel. Our children's ministry in flourishing. We have ordained our first Dakelh (Carrier) elder, Doreen Patrick, to our session. Finally, we are working on a new healing ministry in Ndakzoh. So much is happening we cannot describe it in this short report as we seek to walk in trust, obedience, and faithfulness.

In the Society

Presbyterial

Waterloo-Wellington Presbyterial held their Annual Meeting on Feb 4 at St. Andrew's Guelph with the theme, China Today. Donna Henry, president, welcomed everyone and constituted the meeting with prayer. The Rev. John Borthwick, minister of St. Andrew's, and Kathleen McGillivray, president of the WMS group, also warmly welcomed us.

Members of St. Andrew's led the Opening Worship, and an In Memorial service was conducted. Annual reports were accepted and approved and Wilma Welsh installed the officers.

The afternoon session began with a hymn sing, and the Rev. Bob Spencer delighted us by singing two gospel songs. The Rev. Gordon Timbers, minister of Unionville Presbyterian Church, was our afternoon speaker, and spoke about the mission project in China that he participated in last July. The project was sponsored by The Amity Foundation Summer English Program in partnership with International Ministries (PCC), the City of Batou Education Authority in China, and Unionville Presbyterian Church. The main focus of the trip was teaching conversational English to Chinese teachers for three weeks. This presented the opportunity to put faith into action and also experience Chinese hospitality and culture. In his closing remarks, he indicated that it was a fascinating learning experience. Donna Henry closed the meeting with prayer.

–Geri Schmidt

Brockville Presbyterial met in Knox Presbyterian, Morrisburg, on January 22. Catherine Blatch, president, constituted the meeting with prayer. The Moorewood group led worship, focusing on Matthew 5:3–10, They Shall be Shown Mercy.

Christine Ball

Waterloo-Wellington Presbyterial Annual Meeting. Left to right: Donna Henry, Helen Cleghorn, Rev. Gordon Timbers, and Wilma Welsh

London Presbyterial Annual Meeting. Left to right:Valerie Shaw, Mary Jo Hartman, and Cathy Reid

reported on the progress and challenges of Gracefield Camp and a $200 donation was given to the camp. Christine then led a Bible study on The Sheep and The Goats, with members participating in parts and discussions.

After lunch, we had a speaker from the Naomi Family Resource Centre in Winchester. She spoke about the women and children who seek refuge there, answered questions, and provided great advice for showing concern and mercy for those in distress. Members brought donations from their congregations for the centre.

Knox led the memorial service.

-Donna Wilson

London Presbyterial held their 99th Annual Meeting at Dorchester Presbyterian Church on January 17. President, Cathy Reid, convened the meeting. The Rev. Heather Paton welcomed all to Dorchester Church, and the Rev. Andrew Reid, moderator of London Presbytery, brought greetings. The theme for the day was, Remembering the Child, and after the roll call, minutes, and reports were given, Rev. Paton led the Bible study: Children, Needs, and Mission. Charts were made of children's spiritual and physical needs. Then, WMS projects and ministries were discussed as to their impact on children's lives, either physically or spiritually.

Rev. Paton installed our new officers and after lunch, New St. James WMS led the worship and In-memoriam. Mary Jo Hartman, our guest speaker, was from Rotholme, the only family shelter in Southwestern Ontario. Families can stay for 42 days, but the average stay is two weeks. Most of the shelter's budget comes from private donations and caseworkers welcome the assistance of volunteers. The meeting closed with prayer and singing, Great is thy Faithfulness.

–Elaine Brown

Correction: A mistake was made in the March April 2013 In Remembrance page of *Glad Tidings*. The correct name, Dora McVittie, appears in this edition. We apologize for this mistake.

The Annual Meeting of the **Huron-Perth** Presbyterial Executive Meeting was held at Atwood Presbyterian Church. In spite of inclement weather, approximately 35 members were on hand to hear Bernice Richards give an interesting talk on her mission trip, accompanied by her husband, to Winnipeg Inner City Mission. They carried with them a large load of homemade quilts and blankets for the needy in that city. The Roll Call of the day also reflected our mission purpose, when each group told of the mission activities in their own congregation.

Annual Reports were received, devotions were held, and a delicious lunch was served by the Evening Auxiliary of Atwood Presbyterian Church.

A day of fellowship and food was enjoyed by all.

East Toronto Presbyterial held their 98th Annual Meeting on February 23 at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Scarborough. Rev. Duncan Cameron welcomed the 28 women and four men who attended.

The day began with fellowship and gathering music. Eleanor Keith did double duty, playing the piano and leading worship. She titled worship, Where will you find Jesus? based on Luke 11:9.

Joan Smith, president of the Women's Missionary Society and our guest speaker, spoke about the Mission Study Tour of the Middle East she participated in. She gave a PowerPoint presentation entitled, Along the Path of Faith and Love, highlighting visits to the historic sites in the life of Jesus. She also showed pictures of huge walls surrounding Israeli settlements in Palestinian areas which have separated families and made travel very difficult due to a multitude of checkpoints which they have to pass through to go to work or school.

Huron-Perth Presbyterial Executive

A visit to Hebron took them to the tombs of the patriarchs (Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, and Jacob and Leah). They also visited the offices of the Sabeel Center (which means Spring of Water), a peace-building organization which has a partnership with The Presbyterian Church in Canada. They seek to develop non-violent reconciliation between the Israelis and Palestinians, and each year hold an international youth camp. They also met with Nora Carmi, a human rights lawyer, who will be at the next Presbyterian Women's Gathering in 2014. Joan said that this was an eye-opening, deeply impressive trip, and she asked for prayers for those living in the Holy Land that they may experience peace and freedom from oppression.

Then, Al Clarkson gave a brief presentation on the Presbyterian Museum which he assisted The Rev. Dr. John Johnston in starting 10½ years ago in St. John's Church. It houses rare communion tokens, items sent by missionaries from around the world, the largest collection of church plates, as well as some of the oldest books ever used in seminary education. They now have a permanent curator, Ian Mason.

Following the speakers, was the business meeting, the presenting and approval of the reports, installation of the officers, and a time for prayer. The meeting was closed with the benediction and a grace for the lunch to follow.

-Gladys Stover

Maitland Presbyterial held their annual meeting in Wingham on March 11 with the theme, God Can Use Me.

President, Kathy Armstrong welcomed everyone and constituted the meeting. The WMS Mission Purpose was recited. The worship service was taken from Ephesians 2:8–10 and led by the Kincardine group. Barbara Stuart gave a very inspiring message.

A lovely In Memoriam service was presented by the Brussels group.

Officers for the coming year were installed by the Rev. Peggy Kinsman and The Sacrament of Holy Communion was shared. Mary Robinson gave an invitation to the Spring Rally to be held at Molesworth on May 27. Courtesy remarks were given by Marg Underwood.

The annual meeting of the **Lanark- Renfrew** Presbyterial took place at Almonte Presbyterian Church on Saturday, January 26, 2013. The theme was Matthew 25:40 'Whatever you did for one of the least of these, you did for me'. The meeting began with the WMS purpose and the WMS song, accompanied by George Stewart of Almonte on the organ. Rev. Alison Sharpe extended a warm welcome and roll call was taken with 20 ladies answering. Devotions on

Hebrews 13:2 were led by Almonte ladies, Bettie Hardie and Margaret Sams. Beverly Blais sang the solo 'Like a Shepherd' and Tilana Knoetze led the Lord's Prayer. Hymn #652 'Forth in Thy Name I Go' was sung.

The Season of Prayer was led by Renfrew ladies, Mary Lynn McConnachie and Joan Hilliard, as they prayed for all levels of government and our own WMS organization. Reports from the various officers and groups followed. Vivian Young presented a history of the WMS of St. Andrew's church, Carleton Place, which originated in July 1879. In 1955 there were 23 active auxiliaries in the Lanark- Renfrew Presbyterial. Today there are only six.

Bible Study was carried out by Area Educational Representative, Christine Ball. Six actresses were picked to present a skit from Matthew 25:31–46. Each member present was asked to tell how she personally helped the hungry, thirsty, stranger, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned. Then we listed various ministries supported by the WMS, Presbyterians Sharing, or our congregation, that work with the less fortunate.

A delicious lunch of lasagna and desserts was served by the Almonte Heather Club and WMS.

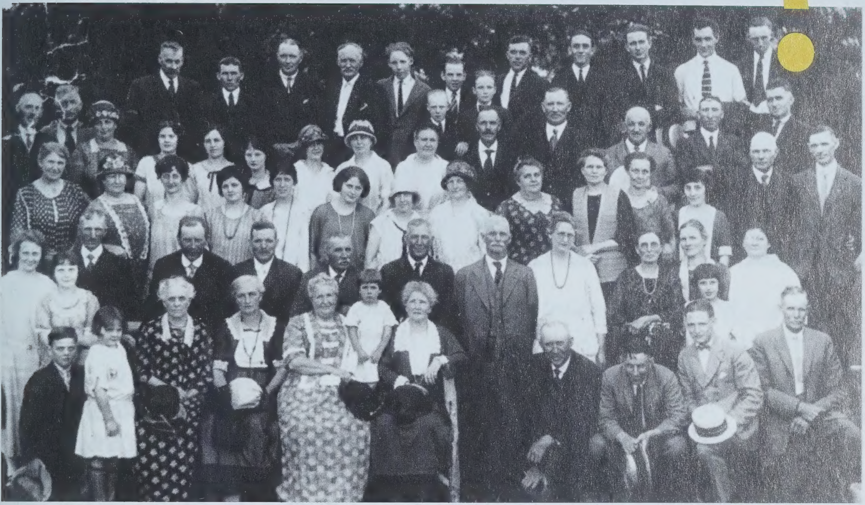
The In Memorial service was presented by Carleton Place based on the theme Whiter than Snow from Isaiah 1:18 and John 10:14–15. White snowflakes were hung on an evergreen tree to represent the three ladies who had passed away during 2012 —Patricia Giles, Eleanor Thompson, and Margaret Watt.

Guest speaker was Jill Turnbull, lay minister at Smith Falls. Jill shared how and why she started volunteering in prison ministry at the medium security facility at Collins Bay. She spoke on the Restorative Justice Systems that gets offenders, victims and community members together to attempt to repair the damages done by criminals. It is powerful to see those who think they are worthless come to accept grace. Lois Patchell thanked Jill for her interesting presentation.

The meeting closed with the hymn 'I don't know about tomorrow' and benediction was by lay minister Jill Turnbull.

In July 2012, Dorothy Barton, celebrated her 100th birthday at Calvin-Goforth Church in Saskatoon.

Can you find Hugh Turner?

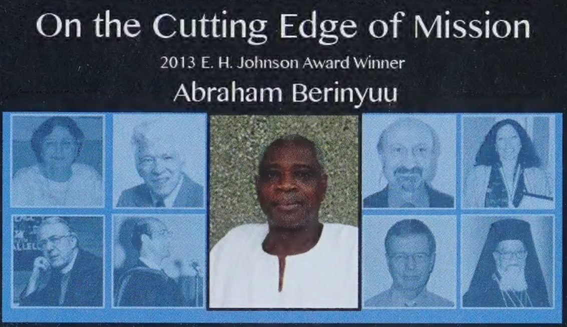


The members of North Caradoc-St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Strathroy, Ontario would like your help in identifying Hugh Turner in this group photo from the early 1900s. This is the only photograph they have of the man whose bequest to the church has had such an enduring impact on the congregation's life and ministry. The only problem is they don't know which one he is! In 1943, Mr. Turner left two shares of Huron and Erie Savings and Loan Society, valued at $200, to North Caradoc Church through his estate as an endowed gift for the church. Seventy years and several mergers and stock splits later, Hugh Turner's gift of $200 has grown to be worth over $160,000! The income generated from the investment has provided funding for building projects at the church and enabled the congregation to hire a part-time staff person to expand their ministry with children and youth. The people of North Caradoc-St. Andrew's may not be able to identify Hugh Turner in this old photo, but they can certainly identify the signs of his continued presence among them through the endowment fund established through his bequest.

To learn how you can make a lasting difference through a gift of stock, a bequest in a will or some other planned gift, contact:

The Planned Giving Office
The Presbyterian Church in Canada
50 Wynford Drive, Toronto, ON
1-800-619-7301
plannedgiving@presbyterian.ca
or go to www.presbyterian.ca/provisionaries

Planting seeds of hope.
For generations to come.


On the Cutting Edge of Mission
2013 E. H. Johnson Award Winner
Abraham Berinyuu

2013 E.H.Johnson Award

This year's E.H. Johnson award will be presented to the Rev. Dr. Abraham Berinyuu, Associate Professor, Deptartment of African and General Studies, University for Development Studies, Tamale, Ghana. The E.H. Johnson Committee has been most impressed by Dr. Berinyuuu's longstanding commitment to the interpretation and practice of ministry among the sick in the light of traditional African medicine and to accessibility and integration rights for disabled men and women. In particular, and with regard to the current tension between Muslim and Christian communities in various African nations, the committee has also been impressed by his work of reconciliation between these faith groups and therefore has deemed him a worthy recipient of the E.H. Johnson Award for 2013.

The Rev. Dr. Berinyuu is a member of Presbyterian Church of Ghana, a long-standing partner of the PCC and one of the 13 founders of the Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network of The World Council of Churches (WCC). In addition, The Rev. Dr. Berinyuu is the Dean of the Faculty of Integrated Development Studies of the University for Development Studies in Tamale, Ghana, and the founder of the Centre for Peace and Sustainable Democratic Culture also in Tamale. He is also an accomplished author having written books on "The History of The Presbyterian Church in Northern Ghana," "A Pastoral Care to the Sick in Africa: An Approach to Transcultural Pastoral Theology," and "Theory and Practice of Pastoral Counseling in Africa."

The Rev. Dr. Berinyuu will be the speaker at the 2013 E.H. Johnson Award luncheon at General Assembly.

History

The Dr. E.H. Johnson Memorial Fund was established in 1981 to continue The Rev. Dr. Edward "Ted" Hewlitt Johnson's commitment to a global

Remembering

Hilda Campbell
Kenyon Presbyterian Church
Dunvegan ON

Dora McVittie
Forbes Presbyterian Church
Grande Prairie AB

Frances H. Halladay
St. John's Presbyterian Women
Grimsby ON

Christina Howe (Nena)
Susan Keller Shumaker Jones
Chippawa Presbyterian Church
Niagara Falls ON

Pearl Beamer
First Presbyterian Church
North Pelham ON

Lillian Leahan
St. Andrew's WMS
Owen Sound ON

Mrs. Vivian Doggett
Annie Purves Group WMS
St. Paul's Presbyterian Church
Port Hope ON

Jean Mirrlees
Richmond Hill WMS
Richmond Hill ON

Elizabeth (Betty) Rowlinson
Paterson Memorial Church
Sarnia ON

Mae Beach
Nora Seaton WMS
Paterson Memorial Church
Sarnia ON

Doris Smith
Mary & Martha Auxiliary,
St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church
Strathroy ON

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view of mission and to extend the horizons of that mission. He lived his view of and commitment to mission through service with his wife Kitty as missionaries of The Presbyterian Church in Canada in Manchuria and as Secretary for Overseas Missions. He also became involved in ecumenical agencies covering many aspects of mission. When Dr. Johnson was elected Moderator of the 95th General Assembly, mission in all its variety and aspects marked his service in that office.

The E.H. Johnson Award is presented "for recognized service on the cutting edge of mission." In making the award, the committee desires to recognize both the person, and the church or organization, with whom the person works, with the understanding that God's mission is incarnated in relationships with sisters and brothers.

Burst Forth

Isaiah 35:1–10

National Presbyterian
Women's Gathering

DATE: May 16–19, 2014

PLACE: Sheraton Parkway Hotel, Richmond Hill, Ontario

REGISTRATION FEES: $350 before November 15, 2013
$450 after November 15, 2013 and before March 31, 2014

INQUIRIES:
womensgathering@presbyterian.ca
416-441-1111 or
800-619-7301 ext. 321

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT
womensgathering.ca

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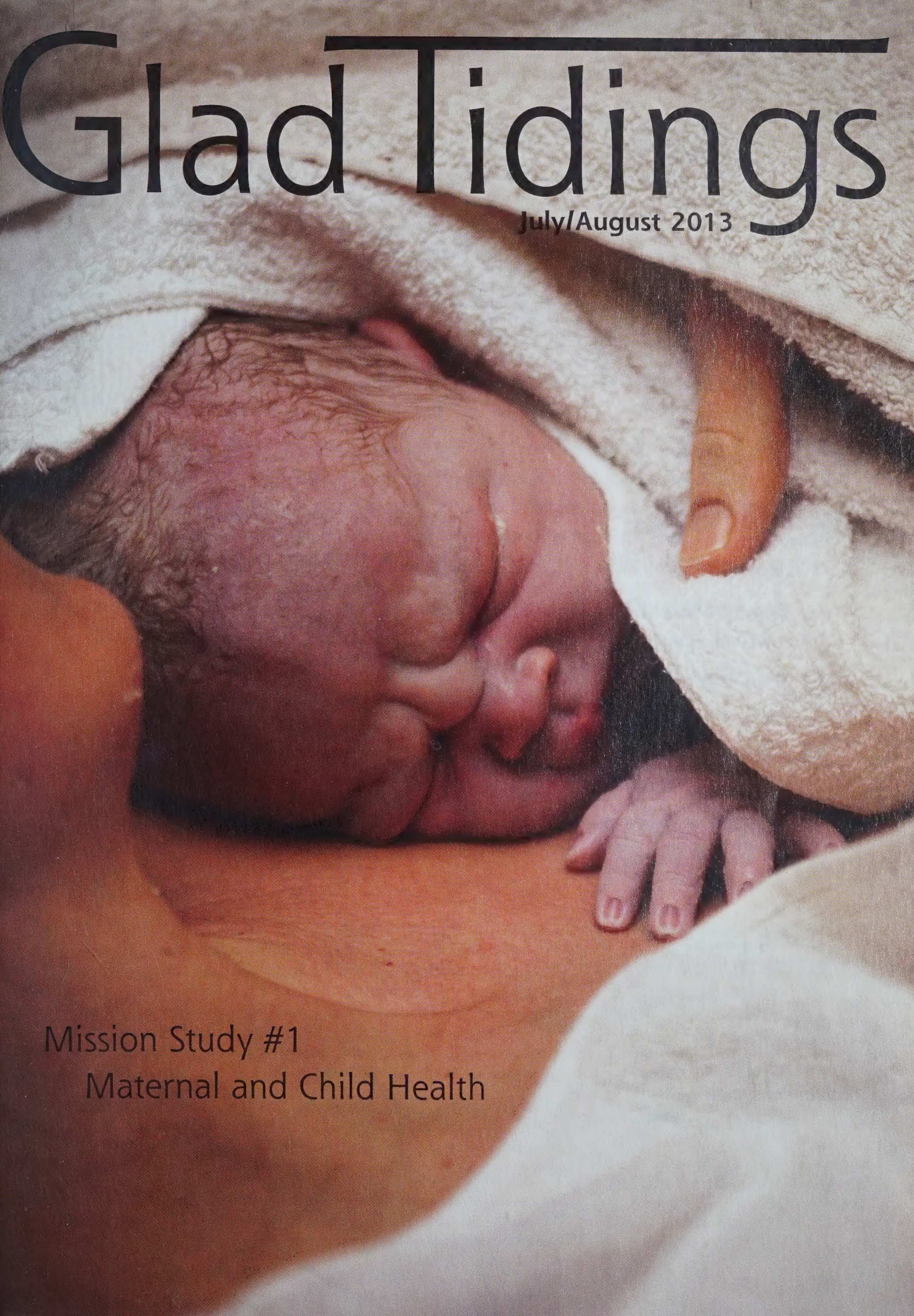
Please report any errors/changes in address

Glad Tidings

July/August 2013



Mission Study #1
Maternal and Child Health

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Glad Tidings

July/August 2013
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Editorial

One day, I opened my local newspaper, and along with the pile of flyers that hit my floor, was an invitation. A local United Church had a flyer in for their Parent and Tot group. Being home part-time, I was able to attend. The program was fairly unstructured—a gym, some toys, and some craft materials. Once or twice we had a speaker. The minister attended occasionally, but basically it was a small group of moms getting together to talk and share. We became friends and although the group has ended, I still see them regularly.

This is just one way your congregation, or your WMS group, can support young parents. Parenting can be isolating, but having a place to meet others can help. It's an easy ministry to start—a clean space, some toys, and a few volunteers to welcome the parents and help engage the children. What a great way to introduce others to God's love?

Stonegate Ministry, which is featured in this month's *Glad Tidings*, also brings God's love to others. Several churches have partnered to reach out to those in need in their community. Through their many programs, they feed, clothe, counsel, support, and care for those in need. This partnership makes the community better.

This summer, I challenge you to look for new ways that you can share God's love, work with others, and serve those in need.

Colleen Wood

Glad Tidings wins at Canadian Church Press Awards

Glad Tidings won three awards at the 2013 Canadian Church Press Awards, including a first place prize. The Rev. John Crowdis won First Place in the category of Personal Experience for his article, What Star is This? published in the January February 2012 *Glad Tidings*.

Colleen Wood also received a third place win for her January February 2012 Editorial, and the Rev. Helen Smith was given an Honourable Mention in the category of Theological Reflection for her Children in Poverty study (July August 2012).

The Presbyterian Record also won several awards.

Photo: Barbara Patterson

May We Ever be Found Faithful

by Linda Dixon

Warm and caring, the young woman, a new bride, is both bright and outgoing. In a country where remaining unmarried is considered a great misfortune she considers herself fortunate indeed. Her husband is both good looking and kind and although today she is feeling a little shy at this, her first extended family gathering since the wedding, she is also enjoying her new relatives.

As she chats away happily with the other women, wanting to make just the right impression, she does not seem to notice the sudden hush in conversation as her husband's oldest brother, now the head of the family, enters the room. Her animated conversation continues unabated until his voice somewhere behind her rises loudly. She stops speaking and turns towards him. He is not looking at her. Instead, he is speaking as if into the air, uttering words that would nonetheless change her life inescapably. "I do not wish to hear this voice again until the woman has borne at least two children into this family."

It was not a suggestion.

It would be seven years before that woman would conceive and bear two children—both of them daughters.

Her voice was not heard until that time. Although the physical health of this woman was never commented on, clearly the devastating impact of those words on the mental health and well-being of this woman, and her progeny, was incalculable.

Many years later, one of her daughters, by then married herself, immigrated to Canada in the hope that her own daughters, and their daughters after them, might live in freedom. It was this daughter who related this account of her personal family history. She now lives in the Etobicoke south neighbourhood of the Greater Toronto Area, called Stonegate community.

Many in the Stonegate community are new Canadians. In fact, the 2006 census reveals that up to 62% of the residents of Stonegate come from other countries— most from Central and Southern European countries, such as Poland, Ukraine, Slovakia, Romania, the Czech Republic, Albania, and Bulgaria.

Right in the centre of this community, you will find Stonegate Ministry. Its core clientele are the 11,000+ tenants, who live in some 79 low-rise apartment buildings in the neighbourhood. These people are well-educated, but unemployment and underemployment are endemic—due to circumstances, not by choice. The inability to secure adequate employment is a common experience among those who choose to immigrate. It puts their income levels among the lowest in all of the Greater Toronto Area and within the poverty range. When we consider the statistics of this community, the numbers are staggering. Child poverty rates run at 38%, a figure more than double the 18% Ontario provincial norm. These numbers mean 2 in every 5 children live in poverty. Seniors in the community fare badly as well—one in every four lives in poverty.

As well, many families in the Stonegate community are headed by a single parent. It is indicative of the strain on already limited family resources. Furthermore, without family networks in close proximity for support and strength, the predictable outcome is isolation, marginalization, and hopelessness. Now in its 22nd year, Stonegate Ministry (SM) stands steadfastly at the epicentre of these destructive forces in order to bring

Time Together Program

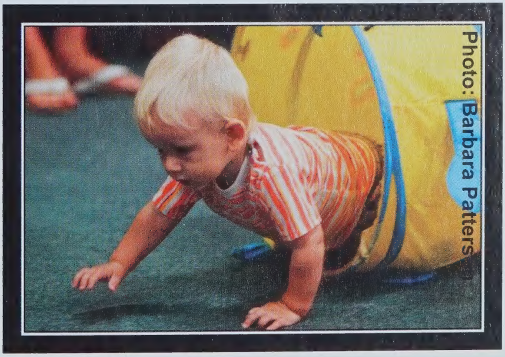

Photo: Barbara Patters

Sandra Kuzniak and the Rev. Linda Dixon ready to sell some of the wonderful items at the Outreach Store

help, hope, and encouragement to this community.

What makes SM unique is that it is a partnership of eight churches representing six denominations: Presbyterian, Anglican, Four Square, Baptist, United, and Catholic and with an Executive Director who is an ordained Methodist clergy. All are working together to accomplish the Stonegate Ministry vision: To work together to build a stronger, kinder, and more just community. And together they are accomplishing their goal in remarkable ways.

Historically, the Stonegate Ministry has been instrumental in community development initiatives. They have revitalized the park so that community children could have a safe, fun place to play and improved street lighting for resident safety. Furthermore, they have advocated to bring a health centre into the community.

In addition, Stonegate Ministry's Outreach Store provides good, clean clothing, footwear, and housewares at very reasonable prices—and some pay nothing at all. Any shopper unable to pay for their purchases is seen as an opportunity for the Outreach Store to practise Jesus' mandate to clothe those in need.

"We give away a great deal of merchandise," says one volunteer. "People are freely given what they need—often we know their circumstances and we simply offer it to them without people even asking." Volunteers and staff are encouraged to build relationships with customers and before long customers and volunteers become friends; each knows something about the others' life. "Relationships are important to us at Stonegate Ministry," says Office Administrator Carl-Anne Foty. "It's all about building community and in a healthy community few misuse privileges."

We also know that people prefer to pay for the things they buy. The ability to provide for oneself and one's family increases one's sense of dignity and self-worth. One Outreach Store shopper shared this personal experience with a staff member late last Fall. "My partner and I are going through a rough patch financially just now. This is my son. He is 8-years-old. I was able to buy his entire school wardrobe for $35 at the Outreach Store," she said with a huge smile. "I couldn't have done that anywhere else! Thank you for being here."

Clothing isn't the only need, because wherever poverty is present, food insecurity is always at hand as well. In one community meeting, the topic of fresh fruit came up. One Stonegate resident, a mother, who had been in Canada three years said as a matter of course, "I can't remember the last time I had a piece of fresh fruit; every piece of fresh fruit goes to my kids."

Food insecurity is a very real issue in the Stonegate community. The repercussions of such deprivation are all too predictable. But when it comes to maternal health, consequences for both mother and child are nothing less than staggering. SM's vision of building a just community requires adequate access to the necessities of life. For that reason, Stonegate Ministry also partners with the local food bank. Each year, through the generosity of partner churches and the community, Christmas hampers filled with gifts, toys, food, and clothing are given to those in the greatest need. Food vouchers also are provided so recipients can purchase something special for their table during the holiday season.

One particular recipient, a male, told how he always celebrates Christmas with his sister and her family. "No one ever expects me to bring anything he says," after all he is poor. "They never make me feel bad

Explaining Christianity Program

about it," he confides, "but still …." His words trail off and he shrugs his shoulders. But then he recalls how on the last food bank day before Christmas, he was unexpectedly presented with a food voucher for $20. He immediately went to the grocery store and purchased a few ingredients to bake something to share with his family. "That was the best Christmas ever!" he exclaims drawing out his words as he vividly recalls the family response. "I felt so good! I had something to share! It was great—really, really great!"

To build a community that is stronger and kinder necessitates addressing not only the physical needs, but the spiritual, emotional, and relational elements of life. Immigrating to a new country, even without language barriers, exacts huge demands on the individual's emotional resources. There is the lengthy legal process, with its long stretches of uncertainty, and lots of cultural adjustments. Add to that strained financial resources and too often, anxiety and depression can occur.

Mental health professionals tell us that parents experiencing anxiety or depression generally do not bond well with their children. The lack of bonding on children results in unproductive citizens at best, and criminal actions when committed to the extreme. To that end, the Lasting Family Connections initiative was launched by Stonegate Ministry in April 2004. Its goal is to nourish and support the development of healthy and lasting relationships between parents and children.

Program originator, leader, and author Barbara Patterson developed the "Time Together" play therapy program to facilitate the all important bonding between a parent and their child. For her work, this gifted facilitator has received grateful reviews from struggling parents. The follow-up "Toddler Time" program was developed at the request of participants with toddler-aged children and is equally valued by attendees. More recently Barbara Patterson has turned her capable hand to adults with a new SM program offering, called "Bridges to Understanding." Piloted a few months ago, its goal is to aid both males and females in identifying and understanding their emotions.

Many more programs are offered by SM to establish spiritual, personal, and relational health and well-being. Summer Sizzler Days are fun recreational days designed to give the community opportunities to relax, have fun, and meet their neighbours and friends. Spiritual direction workshops allow registrants to explore their spiritual life through art and writing. Active listening training workshops are available that enable participants to learn to listen to others, to ourselves, and to God more effectively.

One mom told how her relationship with her teen daughter was fractured to the point that virtually every conversation between the two resulted in yelling and the slamming of doors. One night after the mother's first active listening training session, mom and daughter slipped into the well-rehearsed destructive communication pattern. But this time, mom chose instead to take an active listening posture. The result was remarkable! For the first time in as long as she could remember, the two were able to have a productive conversation. That conversation ended in a new sense of closeness between the two. That one workshop alone began a transformation in this mother-daughter relationship.

Along with our core value of treating every person with dignity and respect, is our commitment to being a visible and articulate Christian witness in our community. Those values are part of the bedrock of the Stonegate Ministry and are practised many times every day. From Bible stories in the Time Together and Toddler Time programs to the inclusion of listening to God through a Bible passage in the listening workshops; from interested volunteers praying a posted "workplace prayer" as they begin their shift to the bi-weekly Prayer for You program where trained prayer teams are available to pray for anyone in the community. One recipient told of her experience, "I felt the love of God all around me. It was wonderful. I did not want the prayer time to stop."

Stonegate Ministry exists to meet the needs of the whole person. One family, Stonegate residents consist of a young mother, her husband, and three small children. The husband and father in the family were very seriously injured in an accident. Recovery is slow and frustrating. Throughout their struggle, these family members have been recipients of Stonegate Ministry's care in many ways. One day not long ago, the woman came with these words of heartfelt appreciation, "I am not here today because I need anything. I am here only to say thank you." Then she said these words:

"When I am troubled, you listen to me;
When I am in need, you provide for me;
And when I am sad, you pray for me.
I love you guys!"

As to Stonegate Ministry's work in the community: The needs are great; the call of God unmistakable; and serving these people is a true honour. Our prayer to God then is and must always be, "May we ever be found faithful. Amen!"

Stonegate Ministry is a registered charity and is supported by The Presbyterian Church in Canada. To learn more about their work, visit their website at www.stonegateministry.ca.

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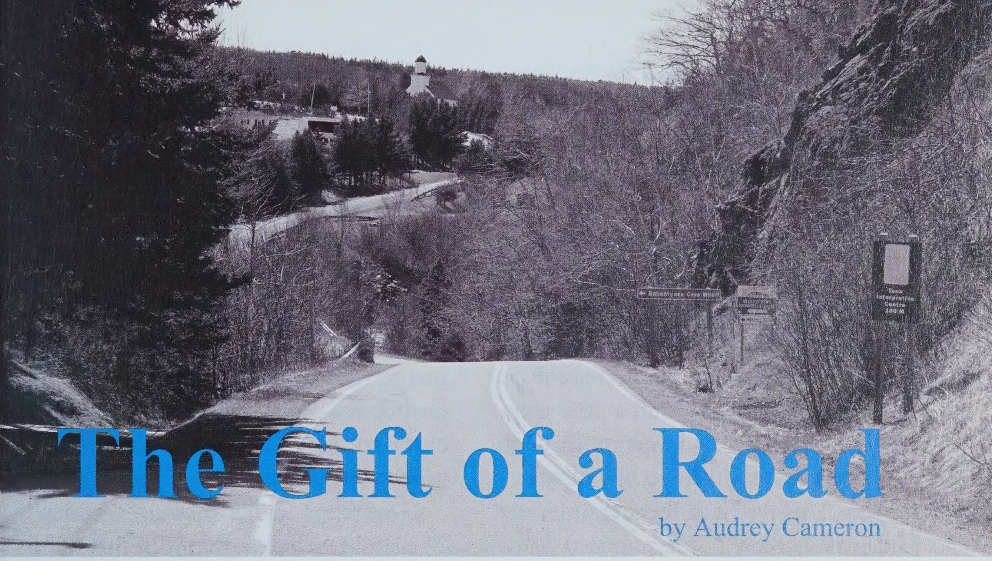


The Gift of a Road

by Audrey Cameron

It is a place I go to when my soul is thirsty. Somehow, in some way, the twists and turns of this road and the views that come with each corner both fill my soul and empty my mind so I can hear the gentle words of the Beloved. It has been on this road where I have heard words of love and encouragement. It has been on this road where I have watched sunsets with a friend and made huge decisions, life changing decisions for my life. The road, travelled by so many, had felt like my own special place.

Yesterday, I thought I needed to go for a drive. I needed a retreat. I set off, with camera in hand, to visit my road, face my brokenness, and give my soul a long drink of refreshment.

I was quickly affirmed as I started my drive. I could hardly believe what I heard as the lady on the radio announced the name of her interviewee. It was the priest whose mantra is "Behold the One who beholds you and smiles." Yes. Earlier in the winter I read his book, was encouraged by his faith, his vision, and his passion for those in this world whom everyone else seems to have forgotten. He is a gentle man with a less than gentle conviction. In the hour that followed, I was accompanied by words of wisdom and words that were familiar for they were words of my own heart. I drove, sipped my coffee, listened, and enjoyed. Oh, this road has had another precious moment. I was grateful. And I thought that was it. I thought that was my retreat.

I pulled into the wharf. I always do. It is a good picture taking spot. It is a good place to smell the salt air and be reminded of the workers of the sea, the fishers, and the ones that Jesus always talked to. The place was unusually full of people. My introverted self normally would have turned around and kept driving. I surprised myself when I realised that I had parked the car and was heading out with my camera. This is really not like me when I am travelling alone, to go to a place full of people. After meandering around for a bit, I found myself beside a car of kind folk. My inquiry of why everyone was at the wharf began a lesson on the "Blessing of the Boats." Of course, tomorrow is Dumping Day, the eve of Lobster season. This day was for preparation and prayer.

"Please stay. You will be glad you did," was their invitation.

So I did. I wandered around a bit more, taking photos, and surprisingly not feeling out of place among the plaid-shirted fishers and their families. My new friends called to me. I was informed they were doing *it* differently this year. Normally, I was told, the boats floated by the end of the wharf where the priest would offer the blessing. "He is going to them!" I was told. It was not what they expected.

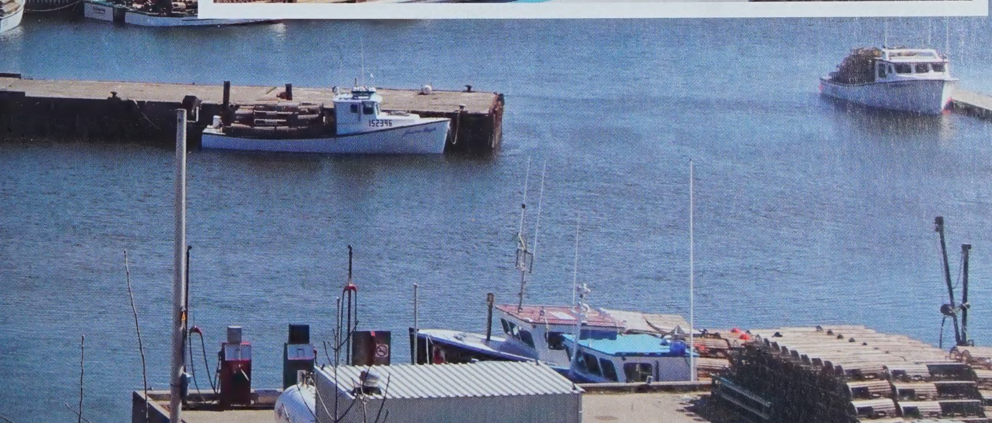
I watched. The priest, dressed in blue jeans and jacket, carrying the chalice, went from boat to boat. Behind him was an older man, dressed much like any of the other fishermen, carrying extra Holy Water in a recycled juice jug. He refilled the chalice the priest was carrying after every couple of boats. It was precious in its simplicity.

I watched with a sense of wonder. The ritual was refreshing for my Protestant self. The presence of the people was holy. If it was 'old hat' to them, it did not show. Faithfully, the priest blessed the boat, generously sprinkling Holy Water on the boat, the traps, the ropes, and the crews, who stopped their work and stood to receive the water and the blessing, then quickly went back to loading their boats for the morning.

I was observing, sneaking photos as I wanted to capture the moment, when the real moment happened. Beside me was one of my 'new' friends, who asked me what I was thinking. I sputtered out something like "incredible" or "amazing." I do not really remember. I just loved what I was witnessing. Before I knew it, the priest and his bottle carrier came over to us. "Father, will you bless us?" And there, on the wharf amid fishers and friends, I was a vessel receiving the Holy Water from the recycled juice jug. It hit me in the face. It hit me on my forehead and my arms. It hit me in my soul. The priest looked at me and smiled. It was that look of 'who are you,' with 'I know you.' His smile was that of the Beloved.

I left the wharf shortly after. I did not go for the sandwiches and sweets that are part of the ritual. I continued down the road. I made a few more stops for some photos, picked up some drift wood, and finished my cold coffee.

I went home. I drove in silence. I prayed and thought, like anyone does after a good retreat. I had gone for a drive. I expected it to be a silent retreat. Instead, I met our Lord. He was hanging out with some fishers and a priest on a wharf.



Home - a Place t

by Ishbel Dimson

My grandson, Nathan, is in Junior Kindergarten. I pick him up on Wednesdays and some Fridays. Each day I ask him, "How was school today?" He replies, "Good." Next question is like pulling teeth, "What did you do at school?" The response, "Oh grandma, I don't remember?" End of discussion. However, one day on the way to the dentist, Nathan says, "Did you know some people have to sleep outside all night?" "Yes, I know that," I answered. "But did you know they have to sleep outside in the winter, too!" I responded that I do know that.

When I wondered why he brought this up, he tells me he learned it at school. So we talk about how terrible that is and I ask what he thinks we can do about

Heal

it. Nathan thinks a good idea would be that I buy them a house. After a very brief discussion on my lack of finances to do this, we come up with other donation alternatives. This is not a lecture on how we should react to street people who ask for money, as each of us must follow his or her own conscience and approach each case individually. What it has done for me, is made me think a lot about *home*.

Some would say it is the sweetest word in the English language. In fact, it may sound as sweet in any language. For many people, the idea of home is a warm, safe feeling, and is a place of refuge, safety, and comfort. It is the core of our earliest memories, where we learn much of what we know. It is the place where we go when we are tired, alone, and afraid. It gives us strength. It is a place where we remember happy times: laughter, tears, and hugs. Christmases, birthdays, graduations, and a host of other moments are celebrated there with the ones who are close to us.

The traditional image of home shows a mother baking cookies in a frilly apron. Father, in a business suit, is coming home from work. A boy is playing with the dog and a girl is playing with her dolls. No one is grubby, untidy, or irritable. There appears to be no worries in this house—no bills, no debt, and no mess. There are no loud arguments, no problems, and no stress. Does anyone live in this dream? Has anyone ever been to this home? Most would say it doesn't exist.

The family today is quite different from the images left to us from the popular media of the 1950s. There are many kinds of families—two-parent families, single-parent families, blended families, families cared for by grandparents. The family unit is sometimes a place of sickness rather than health. It can be hurting, fractured, or broken. And we know all too well that some families are places of danger for some of their members. If there are problems in some families, do we give up on the idea of family? Surely not! When something is broken in nature, it works to mend the affected part. A tree that has been wounded grows a burl, a scar that covers the wound. The tree adapts and then keeps on growing, perhaps in a new direction.

As believers, we need to follow Christ's example rather than be people of judgement and condemnation

When we sense that something is broken in our social structures, we need to heal the hurt just as nature does. But there are some that try to hide from the pain in drugs or other self-destructive responses, withdrawing from the world or becoming violent to themselves and others. Now, we have psychiatrists, counsellors, therapists, healers, and gurus of all kinds to heal the family unit and its members—all avenues that can be very helpful. But there is another resource.

As believers, we need to follow Christ's example rather than be people of judgement and condemnation—perhaps as I have been on my trips to and from downtown to work, as I walked past nameless and faceless people, I needed a four-year-old to remind me of this. Jesus instructed us to be very careful about setting ourselves up as judges over others. In his life, he accepted the adulterer, the thief, and the greedy tax collector. He did not condemn or judge, but loved each person and challenged all to find ways to become whole and to live in justice and peace. God's work is our work or to turn it around, our work is God's work. Do we see the work that we do each day as a part of God's work and God's plan? Do we see that there are many tasks that need to be undertaken to bring about justice and peace in our world? Do we name justice and peacemaking as the work of God and therefore, as our work as well?

James 1:14–17 reads, "What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."

There is an expression, "God has no hands or feet but ours to use." God calls us to do the work that needs to be done. If it is to be, it's up to me. That's our challenge. Each of us needs to use the gifts that God has given us to rise to that challenge.

"God has no hands or feet but ours to use."

Celebrate: Past, Present, Future

The Past

Reflection from our Outgoing President

Joan Smith, spoke about her past three years serving as the WMS President. She said that it has been a busy, but rewarding time. One of her highlights was attending two Truth and Reconciliation Events—one in Saskatoon and the other in Montreal. They were life-changing events as diverse cultures joined to walk side by side. Last July, she was also able to attend the annual meeting and event of Presbyterian Women within the United States of America in Orlando. She enjoyed listening to the excellent speakers, meeting old and new friends from other countries, and gaining some new ideas for our next gathering event. She also enjoyed a trip to Taiwan last September where she was able to see how some of our funds have helped over the years.

She reminded all that as president, she did not stand alone and thanked the staff, executive, and so many others for their support. Finally, she encouraged us to move forward into the future.

The Blanket Exercise

The Blanket Exercise is a wonderful interactive activity that teaches a part of Canadian history that is often ignored. WMS council members were invited to a room with blankets spread over the floor—these blankets represented the land of Canada. Members were invited onto the blankets and they represented the First Nations people. They were free and encouraged to move around. As they moved, the exercise recalled the history of treaty-making,

colonization, and resistance that has resulted in the nation we today call Canada. During this activity, land was lost and so were lives. In the end, many left the blanket, representing those First Nations Peoples who died because of disease, hunger, or while attending residential schools. Those that remained were separated and had reduced lands. The activity did leave us with some hope as it ended with the apology by both the government and the church to residential school survivors.

After some discussion about the activity, there was a presentation from those who attended the Saskatchewan or Quebec National Truth and Reconciliation Events. You can read about the Quebec event on page 30.

The Present

Reports from 2012

Program

WMS groups across the country are varied and so are the resources they use. Many use the resources from the WMS office (*Glad Tidings*, and Mission Awareness Sunday) or resources from the PCC (Making Connections Mission Study, mission staff, and Stories of Mission). Also, over the years, groups have begun to include special interest speakers on topics as wide ranging as Alzheimer's and gardening.

The *Together We Can!* projects are popular among groups and have been very successful. They are being used as a way for WMS groups to bring mission to the fore front of their congregations.

Certainly groups spoke of challenges and that they are beginning to show their age. Membership is declining and leadership positions are hard to fill. However these groups are becoming creative as they continue to meet to work, study, and pray faithfully.

Editorial

The biggest highlight was that we began a mission study as part of *Glad Tidings* in 2012. It has been incredibly well received both within WMS groups, and within congregations. Another highlight is that our funding from the Aid to

Publishers fund of the Government of Canada has increased over the past three years.

Of course, the biggest challenge is that despite the positive feedback from our readers, our numbers continue to decline. We do gain new subscribers every year, but not enough to offset those we lose.

The Book Room

Although many smaller community-based bookstores continue to close, there seems to be a renewed trend towards these independant book sellers. The Book Room will continue to provide excellent customer service, but will also strive to remain flexible as the industry changes. The Book Room continues to provide a real person to answer questions on resources for minsters, elders, leaders, and people in the pew, thanks to the WMS!

Decisions

One of the decision made at this year's council meeting, was that council will meet every two years, with the next meeting being held in 2015. Although members will miss the fellowship, worship, and education, the annual meeting is very expensive. Because this is a change to our constitution, this recommendation will be sent to the General Assembly for final approval.

Speakers

Presbyterian World Service and Development

Ken Kim, Director of Presbyterian Service and Development (PWS&D), gave an excellent presentation on their work in Afghanistan. He began by reminding us that 925 million children go to bed hungry every night and 1 billion children live in poverty (there are an estimated 2.2 billion children in the world today—nearly half of them live in poverty).

Ken visited Afghanistan in December of 2012 and is pleased to report that we have a good partner there. Afghanistan is an amazingly beautiful country with a very rich history, but it has also witnessed many invasions and lots of conflict. It is desert like in places, but areas close to sources of water are very green. There is a lot of vibrant life in Afghanistan despite what you might

hear. However, there is also a large military presence, complete with spy cameras and military check-points. Security is the number one concern for the Afghan people that Ken met. He also spoke of it being a segregated society—men talk to the men, women talk to the women.

He found the people of Afghanistan to be very appreciative. They know we come from another religion and another culture, but we are still well received. He especially felt appreciated by the farmers, who were so thankful for the help they received that enabled them to grow food for their families. PWS&D is working with our partners to combat food insecurity. Farmers are learning improved farming practices and are receiving better seeds, fertilizer, and tools. They are also improving their irrigations systems, and empowering women by providing them with livestock.

PWS&D is also helping in the area of maternal health. In Afghanistan, 1,400 per 100,000 women die every year in childbirth—these rates are among the worst in the world. PWS&D is working to ensure women receive essential pre and post-natal care, and they are upgrading and building health centres, training midwives, and educating both women and men.

Finally, they are working in the area of education for girls. We are actually being asked by the men to provide these opportunities for girls! 70% of Afghans cannot read or write, and 86% of primary-aged girls are out of school, so the need is great. To date, we have had over 3,982 girls enrolled in educational programs and have trained over 150 teachers.

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General Secretary Life and Mission Agency
Rick Fee

Israel-Palestine Mission Trip

In the Fall of 2012, several of our council members participated in a trip to the Middle East. While there, the group not only visited some of the Biblical sites, but also had the opportunity to visit many of our projects and partners.

They first visited the YM-YWCA Olive Tree Project. This project works to replant trees that have been uprooted and destroyed by the Israelis in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. The trees are already bearing fruit for farmers and their families.

They also visited the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel. The EAPPI hosts ecumenical accompaniers from different countries that provide a protective presence to vulnerable communities and to simply walk with individuals.

They also visited Sabeel, an ecumenical grassroots liberation theology movement among Palestinian Christians. This group, inspired by the life and teaching of Jesus, seeks to deepen the faith of Palestinian Christians and to promote unity among them and lead them to act for justice and peace.

Rev. Dr. John Vissers

The Rev. Dr. John Vissers, Moderator of the 138th General Assembly of the PCC brought greetings and began with a responsive call that he learned in Malawi:

Vissers: The Lord is good
People: All the time.
Vissers: All the time.
People: The Lord is good and that is His nature
All: WOW!

He feels he has experienced God's goodness over the past year. He has attended two Truth and Reconciliations events, Canada Youth 2012, and Africa (Malawi and Ghana). He has also visited many congregations. He spoke of his plane landing in Malawi to a runway filled with young people and women singing and dancing. He spoke of his time at Canada Youth as 'loitering with intent'. And of the TRC, he said that there is a lot of work still to be done. He felt a renewed sense of hope at the congregational level across Canada. According to him, congregations are feeling the need to move forward and trust God.

The Future

The 2014 Women's Gathering was launched at council! Council was the first to receive the registration book and to be introduced to the theme of Burst Forth from Isaiah 35. Groups learned of the excellent leadership that was already in place—the keynote speakers, Dr. Samantha Nutt and Kim Phuc (the girl in the picture), as well as the preachers (Rev. Emily Bisset, Rev. Jean Morris, Rev. Kristine O'Brien, and Rev. Linda Park). They heard about the great workshops, and that the Rev. John Bell would be leading our praise time. They also heard that once again, women from our partner churches around the world, would be joining us for the exciting time. Groups were encouraged to promote the event and to join our Facebook group.

Looking to the future, we also discussed our *Together We Can!* projects. For 2012–2013, we will continue to promote Maternal Health in Malawi, and our Canadian project (supporting Saskatoon Native Circle Ministry and the Cariboo Ministries). We will also add a new project—Maternal Health in Afghanistan—which will begin immediately.

Also looking to the future, we are looking forward to another mission exposure tour. Council Executive will choose a destination for a mission exposure trip for 2015.

Likely, the most significant change for the future will be that after years of visioning, research, and dialogue, the WMS is hoping to transform itself to reach out to more women within the PCC. In recent history, we have seen a real desire for women to meet with other women. This was expressed by many in attendance at the 2011 Women's Gathering. We also know that many other denominations have national women's organizations. So, the WMS hopes to create the Presbyterian Church in Canada Women (PCCW) as an umbrella organization that will consist of current WMS groups, the Women's Gathering, and new women's groups. Its vision will be, "To celebrate and nurture Christian living for all women of The Presbyterian Church in Canada."

The WMS will be asking the 2013 General Assembly to consider this and that the terms of reference for the PCCW will be drawn up in consultation with Assembly Council and be reported to the 140th General Assembly.

To close the meeting, the 2014 Council Executive was installed to continue to serve the WMS into the future.

A Call to Prayer

This prayer was used at our Annual WMS Council Meeting and was provided by the Synodical of Quebec and Eastern Ontario. Please pray for your WMS.

We come before you Lord with praise and thanksgiving for all the WMS work that has happened this past year and we ask for your presence as we plan for the future.

Thank you for the women who have travelled from BC to be here—for the two Bettys—Betty McLagan, who sets an example for those of us who think we are getting too old to take on new responsibilities and Betty Siverns as she steps into her role as president. Be with them.

Thank you for the women from Alberta and their new president, Marlene, as they carry on while groups are disappearing. Thank you also for the life of Marg Befus who was here to welcome us for several years.

Thank you for the Saskatchewan group and their dedication to the WMS. We pray for Arlene and the faithful workers in Saskatoon who continue to minister in your name.

Thank you for Ina and the remaining Manitoba Presbyterial which has provided us with much talent. We continue to pray for Joanne and give thanks for Carol for sharing her talent and enthusiasm.

Thank you for the nine Presbyterials in Southwestern Ontario that have provided so many leaders and active participants over the years. May they continue to use their collective wisdom to encourage and mentor those who follow in your path.

Thank you for the Synodical of Central, Northeastern Ontario, and Bermuda and its varied Presbyterials which have always been key to our WMS. We thank you for giving us our president, Joan Smith, who has devoted so much of her time for the past three years. We also thank you for the talent of Janet who works to keep our books balanced.

Thank you for our own Synodical of Quebec and Eastern Ontario and our Presbyterials with diminishing numbers. Thank you especially for a new group looking to the future. We give thanks for Montreal which almost 150 years ago was the centre of the first women's missionary group.

We also thank you Lord for the WMS staff—for Sarah, Susan, Alexis, Alana, and Colleen.

For all these things we give thanks. May we also remember that we are here because of our saviour, Jesus Christ, who taught us not to be afraid to do things differently or to go to new places, to help those in trouble, and most of all to love one another. In His name we pray. Amen

This is the first of four studies on maternal health

MATERNAL and CHILD HEALTH

by Colleen Wood

For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb.
Psalm 139:13

Opening Reflection

Leader: O Lord, you have searched me, and known me.

All: You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thought from far away.

Leader: For it was you who formed my inward parts;

All: You knit me together in my mother's womb.

Leader: I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

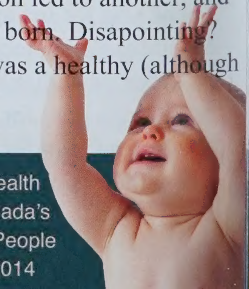
All: Wonderful are your works

Psalm 139 (various verses)

99%
of all maternal dealths occur in developing countries

Introduction

I remember preparing for the birth of my first child. I arrogantly prepared my birth plan and brought it to the hospital. I filled out forms with my requests. I planned to do the whole thing as naturally as possible, although within the confines of a hospital. Then, I developed high blood pressure. It was mild and controllable, but still, concerns were raised. I would not be able to wait for labour to begin naturally, but would be induced on the due date. One intervention led to another, and after an emergency C-section, my son was born. Disapointing? Yes. But the reality was in the end, there was a healthy (although exhausted) mom, and a healthy baby.



Study 2 Maternal Health in Afghanistan in September/October 2013

Study 3 Maternal Health in Malawi in January/Febrary 2014

Study 4 Maternal Health among Canada's Aboriginal People May/June 2014

Had I been a pregnant woman in a developing country, or even within certain parts of Canada, or pregnant during a different time in history, my journey might have been very different. The result might not have led to a healthy baby—healthy mommy ending. My blood pressure might not have been monitored. It might have spiked putting both my life and the life of my child at risk. For many around the world, giving birth is risky, even life-threatening. Over the course of the next four studies, we will explore some of the issues of maternal health within Canada and around the world.

Biblical Reflection

Break into groups of 2–3 and give each group one of the following passages to explore:

Genesis 21:1–7
Luke 1:7-14
Genesis 35:16–21
Luke 1: 57–58
1 Samuel 4:19–22
Luke 2:1–7

(If your group is small, you can choose 2–3 of the passages and work through them together.)

1. What are 2–3 words that describe the birth story in your passage?
2. From this passage, or from other information you remember in the Bible, describe the mother in this passage?
3. What are some of the details missing from this story?
4. What feelings do you have about this birth story?

Maternal Health Facts

According to the World Health Organization, maternal health refers to the health of women during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period.[i] We tend to think of maternal health as a women's issue, but it is far from being a women's issue. This is a world issue. The death of a woman in childbirth is an issue for us all. These women are daughters, sisters, mothers, wives, nieces, and cousins. They are a part of their communities. These women contribute to the lives of so many—male and female. If the infant survives, and the mother dies, that infant is three to ten times more likely to die in the next two years, and any of the women's remaining children become more vulnerable. These women contribute income to a household, sometimes the only

income. These women have the potential to change families and impact the world. Their children, too, have potential. These children, if they remain healthy, can attend school. These children, if they remain healthy, can become productive adults. These children, if they remain healthy, can change families, communities, countries, even the entire world.

The good news is that maternal mortality rates have nearly halved since 1990. An estimated 287,000 maternal deaths occurred in 2010 worldwide, a decline of 47 per cent from 1990. However, these levels are far removed from the 2015 target that was named as one of the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals that were agreed to by 189 countries in the year 2000.[ii] And in some regions, the statistics have gotten worse. In the developing world, maternal death is the second leading cause of death among women of reproductive age.[iii]

Around the world, one woman dies every 90 seconds in pregnancy or childbirth.
Amnesty International

And infant deaths are also way too high. (Reducing child mortality rates was another of the Millennium Development Goals.) More than 3 million infants die in the first month of life, and one-third of those die on their first day. Not surprising, nearly all newborn and maternal deaths (98 and 99 percent, respectively) occur in developing countries where pregnant women and newborn babies lack access to basic health care services—before, during, and after delivery.[iv] What might surprise you is that Canada has the second highest infant death rate of any country in the industrialized world. (The United States has the highest rate.)[v]

Before delivery, antenatal (prenatal) care is essential to improving

> Giving birth should be your greatest achievement not your greatest fear.
>
> Jane Weideman

the survival outcomes of women and infants, and this care is often simple and inexpensive. This care should include screening high risk pregnancies to detect or treat complications, educating the mother (and when possible the father, as well), identification and management of infections, tetanus immunizations, and nutritional supplements.[vi]

During delivery the leading causes of death are severe bleeding, infections, unsafe abortion, high blood pressure, and hypertensive disorders (pre-eclampsia and eclampsia). With minimal care, many of these deaths are preventable; most certainly, having a skilled health care professional present at a birth saves lives. For example, a simple shot of oxytocin administered to the mother by a health care professional following childbirth effectively reduces the risk of bleeding. Infections can be prevented through good hygiene, or treated if identified early by the health care professional.[vii]

Finally, postnatal care is also essential. Again simple things, such as breastfeeding education, encouraging Kangaroo mother care (keeping the infant, especially pre-term infant close to encourage warmth and feeding), and infection prevention.[viii]

In addition to the medical issues, there are some other issues at play here. Issues of gender inequalities do make a difference in maternal health outcomes. Educated girls tend to marry later and have their children later, reducing some of the issues that lead to mother and infant mortality. They also tend to be healthier. Family planning also saves the lives of mothers and babies. It helps women to avoid pregnancies when their bodies are too young or old, or to space their children at intervals that are healthier.[ix] Educating the men is essential in these issues to improve gender equality and allow for more educational opportunities for women.

Together We Can!

The WMS cares about maternal health. We have two *Together We Can!* projects that deal directly with maternal health issues. You can contribute to programs that improve the maternal health of women in Malawi, or the maternal health of women in Afghanistan.

In addition, our third *Together We Can!* project supports work with Canada's Aboriginal Peoples by supporting the work of the Cariboo Ministries, and Saskatoon Native Circle Ministry. These ministries also have the ability to support young mothers and their infants.

Poverty of course also affects maternal and infant mortality rates. Those in poverty do not have access to health care, and countries in poverty cannot provide the necessary care to their people. Issues of civil unrest can also affect care as individuals are unable to move freely around the country to easily access medical care. Those living in refugee camps are also at risk.

Among Canada's First Nations Peoples there are similar challenges as for those in other parts of the world. In remote and northern areas there is the challenge of distances and transportation costs as well as few trained health care providers. These lead to higher mother mortality rates and we also know that Aboriginal children are more likely to die during the first year of their lives.[x] "In 1999, the First Nations infant mortality rate—the number of infants who die in the first year of life, expressed as a rate (per 1,000 live births) for that year—was 8.0/1,000 live births (compared to 5.5/1,000 for Canada as a whole), with Sudden Infant Death Syndrome identified as the leading cause of death." (Health Council of Canada, 2005:45)

To Think About:

1. Does maternal health matter to you? Why or why not?
2. How do you think it would feel to be a young pregnant woman in a rural part of the world with no access to medical care? What would your fears and hopes be for you and your unborn child?
3. How would you feel as the father of that unborn child?
4. Why is it important to improve maternal health around the world? How does it affect families, communities, and entire countries?

Closing Prayer

Creator God, we thank you for the miracle of birth.

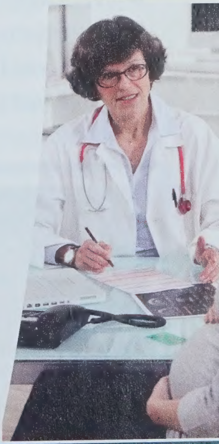
We pray now for the health and well-being of all women. We pray especially for pregnant women around the world. May they receive the care they need before, during, and after the birth of their children.

We pray for young children around the world. May each have the care they need to thrive and develop into the people you have called them to be. We especially pray for young women and pray that they will have equal opportunities to thrive in this world.

In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

1. Choose a mother from 2–3 different decades to talk about their birth experience. What things have changed? What things remain the same?
2. Create a prayer poster on the issue of maternal health. This can be large enough to post on a bulletin board, or small enough for each member to bring home as a prayer reminder. Bring in magazines and invite individuals to cut out pictures of young women, young couples, and babies. On top of the paper, in bold letters write, Maternal Health … it matters to me. Then glue the pictures you collected to create a mosaic of people.
3. Let your voice be heard. Write a letter to your MP and to Prime Minister Stephen Harper (pm@pm.gc.ca) to thank them for the current CIDA funding on maternal health, and encourage for it to continue or increase.



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[i] "Maternal Mortality" World Health Organization, May 2012, www.who.int/mediacentre/factssheets/fs348/en/index.html

[ii] "Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health," We Can End Poverty 2015, Millenium Development Goals, www.un.org/millenniumgoals/maternal.shtml

[iii] "Fact File: 10 Facts of Maternal Health." World Health Organization, www.who.int/features/factfiles/maternal_health_facts/en/index.html

[iv] "Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health," We Can End Poverty 2015, Millenium Development Goals, www.un.org//millenniumgoals/maternal.shtml, p. 5.

[v] "Surviving the First Day: State of the World's Mothers 2013." Save the Children, 2013, p.3.

[vi] Ibid. p.8

[vii] "Maternal Mortality" World Health Organization, May 2012, www.who.int/mediacentre/factssheets/fs348/en/index.html

[viii] "Surviving the First Day: State of the World's Mothers 2013." Save the Children, 2013, p.43.

[ix] "Surviving the First Day: State of the World's Mothers 2013." Save the Children, 2013, p.3.

[x] Understanding the Improving Aboriginal Health in Canada. Health Council of Canada, 2011, p. 11.

My Journey Within Our National Journey

by Colleen Wood

It was with fear, and I pray humility, that I travelled to Montreal on April 23–27 to participate in the Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) Quebec National Event. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada was established in 2008 to tell the history of the Indian residential schools and their impact, and to initiate the process of reconciliation.

Although the event began on April 24, my journey began prior to this as I did read and try to learn what I could prior to the event. As well, we were welcomed to Montreal on April 23 with a lovely dinner provided by the Presbyterians from the local planning team. It was lovely to see some familiar faces, and meet a few new friends.

The event began early in the morning on April 24 as we walked to Place du Canada Park, almost right beside our hotel, for the lighting of the Sacred Fire. As the sun rose between the buildings of downtown Montreal, we encircled the Sacred Fire. The Aboriginal leaders added offerings of tobacco to the fire and brought their prayers. I especially appreciated their prayers for strength. At the finish of this gathering (although the fire would remain burning throughout the entire event and the ashes would eventually be taken to the next event in Vancouver in September), we were all welcome to put a small pinch of tobacco on the fire and bring our own prayers. I offered my own personal prayers for strength and humility.

We then gathered later in the day, again at Place Du Canada Park, to join the survivors as they walked to the Grand Salon at the Fairmont Queen Elizabeth Hotel, where we were welcomed to the territory and participated in the

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SURVIVORS
SURVIVANTS DES PENSIONNATS INDIENS
SURVIVANTS DES PENSIONNATS INDIENS
RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SURVIVORS

opening ceremonies. We were welcomed by Mohawk Elder, John Cree, to Turtle Island. I was humbled by his words, that he was, "so glad the Creator put you here to listen and try to heal."

Justice Murray Sinclair, Chair of the TRC, then gave a great introduction to the TRC national gatherings. This is the fifth of seven events. He reminded us that children, as young as five, were forcibly removed from their families and their communities and taken to the residential schools. The settlement with the Canadian government regarding the residential schools was signed in 2006 and of the 80,000 claimants, 37,000 claimed serious physical or sexual abuse. He did say that the money provided in the settlement could help the survivors, but that two identified needs came through in the settlement: the need to share the truth and the need for reconciliation. The survivors set aside $60 million of the settlement to reveal the stories and for truth and reconciliation. Quebec had 11 of the 140 schools. (In total, the Presbyterian Church in Canada operated eleven residential schools. However, at the time of Church Union in 1925, responsibility for the majority of these schools was transferred to the newly formed United Church of Canada. Only two schools—Birtle School in Manitoba and Cecilia Jeffrey School in Kenora, Ontario—remained the responsibility of the PCC.)

Sinclair also reminded us that each gathering is themed around one of the seven sacred teachings—love, respect, courage, honesty, wisdom, humility, and truth. The theme for his event was humility which I especially appreciated. I was struggling with no specific role at the event. I was not certain why I was there. I did not know what I was bringing. All I could ask was that I would be capable of bringing a spirit of humility and a willingness to be open and listen.

Sinclair continued to talk about the Aboriginal Peoples and how we were told, directly or indirectly, to be ashamed about everything about ourselves. He continued that humility is different than shame. Humility is not to be ashamed. The elders teach,

"to know one self as a small and sacred part of all creation. Each one of us is sacred." We should not be ashamed of something sacred. Sinclair closed by saying that reconciliation is not going to happen without dialogue and humility.

The next few days were overwhelming. I was overwhelmed by the information. I was overwhelmed by the emotion. I was overwhelmed with the strength of those sharing. I was overwhelmed by the way we were received.

First, the information. I had some awareness of the issue of residential schools, but I was still overwhelmingly ignorant. I was ignorant that this went on for so much of our history. The first residential school was opened in 1840 and the last one closed in 1996—150 years of history. The primary goal of these schools, as reported in many documents, was to Christianize, and 'civilize' the child. I have heard it often said that their goal was to kill the Indian in the child, but I was surprised that this was truly the policy of these schools, not just a way to summarize their activity after the fact.

I was also ignorant regarding the number of missing children, children who died in these schools. There are currently no records of these deaths, and often they were not reported to the children's parents, but certainly student deaths were not uncommon. At one point, Mary Wilson, Commissioner of the TRC, reminded us that the two empty chairs on the stage were a symbol of the children who did not return from these residential schools.

I was also surprised that overwhelmingly, the education at residential schools was poor. There was a belief that providing advanced levels of education would be a waste of money and unfair because the First Nations Peoples would not have the ability to advance and use these skills in society. As well, the children at many of the schools had to provide labour for the schools, sometimes leaving little time for the educational component at the residential schools. Now, the teachers at these schools did have a very challenging time. They worked long hours for low pay in isolated conditions and many were not qualified. Any positive stories that did come out of these schools did come because some of the teachers were dedicated, creative, and hard working. (Although many of the stories recounted were negative, there were a few positive ones.)

Secondly, I was overwhelmed by the emotion and strength of the residential school survivors. I heard from a mother of four adult daughters, and now a grandmother of a young girl. Because of her experience as a residential school survivor, she was never able to tell her own children she loved them or give them physical affection. She has yet to tell her daughters about her residential school experience. Many referred to the residential schools as a prison where no one cared. We heard that many of the children had their names changed, and they were referred to by a number. Others spoke of physical and sexual abuse, sometimes at the hand of fellow students, sometimes from the teachers or school leaders. Sandy White Hawk, an honorary witness, spoke of this sharing time as being a sacred time. She explained that these stories are a medicine, and a voice for those who are no longer here. Hearing these stories was incredibly hard, but they need to be heard.

Finally, I was overwhelmed by the way we were treated. We were thanked for our presence in both words and in actions. Eloge Butera, an honorary witness, human rights activist, and Rwandan genocide survivor, commended members of the religious community for showing up. He reminded us of the words of Romans 12:21: to conquer evil with good. He challenged us that if we are to do 'good' to those who harm us, how much more should we do for those we have harmed. I was truly humbled that the survivors welcomed me. They allowed us to share in their practices. They allowed us to hear their stories. They shared their talents with us. I am not sure if I would have had the same ability in the same situation.

So, is there hope? Can we ever move from the truth to reconciliation? I heard stories of hope and forward movement. A young person spoke about reconciliation beginning with one's self and one's family. His family has gathered for a family ceremony to talk about the experiences of those who survived the residential schools and of being raised by a survivor. It has been a lot of listening, but incredibly helpful in moving forward.

We also heard Justice Murray Sinclair talk of hope, "there is hope, but we must persevere." The apology given by the Canadian government was a beginning, not an ending. Dialogue must continue within our families, within our communities, and among our national leaders.

Often this dialogue, and also any action, is missing. Sheila Fraser, Auditor General of Canada from 2001 to 2011, says that every one of our audits on the programs and services to First Nations Peoples living on reserves point to inequality. Some of our Aboriginal Peoples have no access to safe water, education, decent housing, or health care services. These inequalities are unacceptable in a country like Canada, and she believes that until our First Nations Peoples are treated equally, there cannot be reconciliation. There is hope, but it may not come quickly or easily.

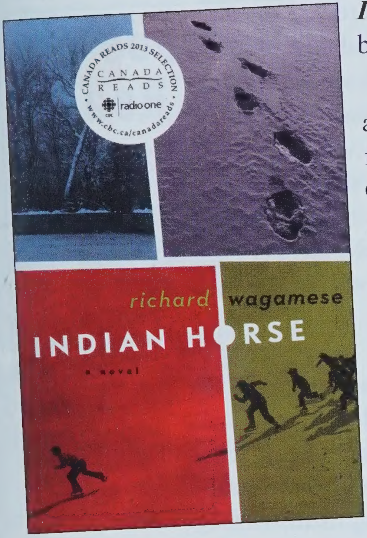
So what now do I see as my role within this journey? I do believe in education. The residential schools mark 150 years of our Canadian history and is a part of our Presbyterian history. It needs to be shared. I believe also, that we, as Canadians and Presbyterians, need to use this knowledge to better understand the First Nations Peoples. It is easy to judge others. It is easy to blame the problems among the Aboriginal Peoples on themselves. But, knowing the history, we must accept some of the blame. As one survivor said, having experienced what the survivors experienced, it would not be normal to actually be normal!

In conclusion, I need to work for justice. In our study in the May-June issue of *Glad Tidings*, we learned of Shannen's Dream. Shannen Koostachin, a youth advocate from the Attawapiskat First Nation in Ontario, believed in quality and culturally-based education for First Nations' children and youth. Currently, there are many Aboriginal Peoples living on reserves with inadequate housing, schools, and even water. I need to give a voice to these situations. Land claims issues are complex, but I need to learn more about these issues so again I can continue the journey for justice.

Shelagh Rogers, CBC journalist, says that you can't un-know this truth once you know it. Having heard the stories, I cannot go back. I must journey onward, learning as I travel, and speak out for justice for all.

Reviews

reviewed by Colleen Wood



Indian Horse

by Richard Wagamese

I decided to read *Indian Horse* after hearing about it on CBC's Canada Reads. It was a finalist in the competition and was the People's Choice. I thought it would be good preparation for attending the Truth and Reconciliation Event in Montreal (an idea later confirmed by David Phillips, Healing and Reconciliation Animator, Justice Ministries).

The book follows the story of Saul Indian Horse, a northern Ojibway. He is taken away from his family as a young boy and placed in a residential school. He escapes the school because of his amazing skill in hockey, but this escape is not soon enough. The experience still breaks him.

At times, this novel is hard to read. At times, it is filled with hopes and dreams. At times, those hopes and dreams are shattered. Often it confronts the racism that was (and is) so present in our country. Wagamese writes this book having been raised by parents, who survived the residential schools and were broken by the abuse they witnessed and experienced. He knows what happened at the schools and how it has affected those students and the generation that has followed.

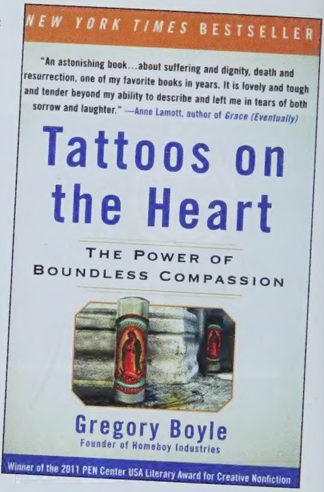
For those who have not heard any of the stories of abuse, this novel certainly brings that to you. It is not an easy read, but I believe an important one as we continue to strive towards reconciliations with our Aboriginal brothers and sisters.

Tattoos on the Heart

by Gregory Boyle

This is an interesting book by an even more interesting man. Gregory Doyle is a Jesuit Priest and director of Homeboy Industries. Homeboy Industries is not your usual charity. Although the work began prior to this, its true inception was in the summer of 1992, in an old bakery. Boyle hired gang members, who wanted to begin a new life. Today, Homeboy Industries continue to serve high-risk, former gang-involved men and women in many ways—tattoo removal, employment services, legal services, and training services, to name a few.

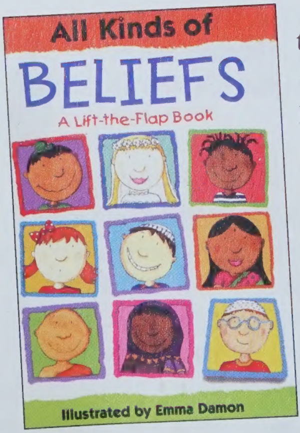
This book is a book of miracles. First, the miracle that Gregory Boyle was able to truly see God in these men and women. When so many of us might have thought that the situation and these lives were hopeless, Boyle cared for them, and even saw God in them. I love his quote, "If there is a fundamental challenge within these stories, it is simply to change our lurking suspicion that some lives matter less than others." Boyle truly believes they matter, and teaches them that God loves them, just as they are. Boyle truly believes that God truly loves and accepts these gang members, and that God believes "they could not be one bit better."


NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER
"An astonishing book...about suffering and dignity, death and resurrection, one of my favorite books in years. It is lovely and tough and tender beyond my ability to describe and left me in tears of both sorrow and laughter." —Anne Lamott, author of Grace (Eventually)
Tattoos on the Heart
THE POWER OF BOUNDLESS COMPASSION
Gregory Boyle
Founder of Homeboy Industries
Winner of the 2011 PEN Center USA Literary Award for Creative Nonfiction

Secondly, these stories are miracles—rival gang members working together and with so many being rescued from their lives. These stories will make you laugh and cry as lives are transformed. These stories are raw and real and while some of them end in hope, others don't. All are, however, worth reading. Boyle has dedicated his life to these people and lives among them. Through him, we can learn about their lives and about the love God has for them … and for us.

One final note on this book, I know of several men who have suggested it as a powerful and emotional read, so it might be a good present for the men in your life.

All Kinds of Beliefs
by Insight Kids
illustrated by Emma Damon



This is a great book to introduce young children to world religions. A lift-the-flap book, it begins by stating that some people believe in God and some people do not believe in God. It then goes on to briefly talk about six different religions—Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, Jews, Sikhs, and Hindus. It introduces different clothing, for example, some Christians wear a Cross on a chain, and some Muslim boys wear a Toki on their head. It introduces us to places of worship, for example, Hindus worship in a Mandir, and Buddhists worship in a Wat. It also has some beautiful pop-up illustrations of the interiors of places of worship. It also gives some ideas for what happens in homes of different religions, for example, in Jewish homes a family meal is eaten every Friday and the father blesses his children. Finally, it concludes by reminding children that we all have different beliefs, but we are all special.

It then asks, "What do you believe in?" which is a great way to lead into your own family discussions on what you believe.

Living in such a multicultural world, I think this book is important. We go to the park and see children of various faith groups, and I don't know all the vocabulary to talk about this with my children. This book gives us some of the vocabulary. But it also encourages us to have a discussion about what we believe. I would use this book with my 3-year-old and my 7-year-old. I know both would find it interesting, and my seven-year-old would love the discussion that would follow.

Migrant
by Maxine Trottier
illustrated by Isabelle Arsenault

I was instantly drawn to this book because of its illustrations. They have a magical folk-like feel to them. This book is the story of Anna, a young girl of Migrant farmers. She imagines what life would be like as different animals. Sometimes she feels like a jack rabbit, because they live in abandoned burrows. Sometimes she imagines she is a kitten, curled up with her sisters in one bed.

Although I love this book, I don't know how much my children would learn regarding the circumstances of migrant workers and their family. I could likely have a brief conversation about it with my seven-year-old, but for my three-year-old it would just be a book about a little girl with a lovely imagination. I still might like to have it on my shelf because of the lovely language and images, but I don't think it would become a family favourite.

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Mission In Action

Paul McLean
Taiwan

Great news! The Hakka Bible we spent nearly 30 years translating is now available online!

Please go to www.bible.is. You can sign-in for free and then search under "Bibles" to find the Hakka Bible.

You can read the whole Bible (Old and New Testaments) online for free. And you can listen to the audio New Testament online for free. I discovered it last night. How exciting to hear the voices of over 30 dear Hakka coworkers who taped this last summer! (There are a few small glitches in the written online text, but we are working with Hosanna to try to fix these as soon as possible. Thanks for your patience and prayers.)

Special thanks to God for: Hsu Su-chen at the Bible Society in Taiwan who first introduced us to Hosanna; the Hosanna technicians from the Philippines, Rose and Toto, who worked so hard every day for nearly two months; Rev. Yap Mi-fi, Rev Phang Tet-kui, Angela, and all the people who helped at Chung-lak Presbyterian Church, all the Hakka readers, praying friends and others. May God bless each one!

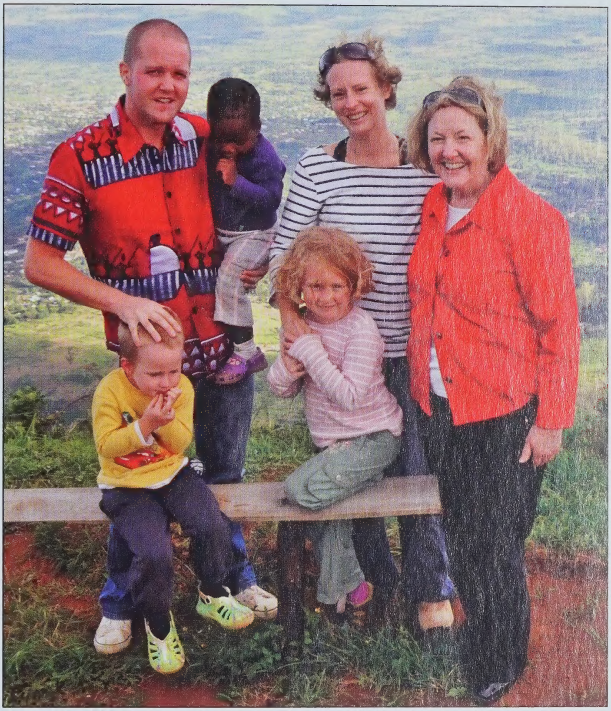
There are Apps for the Hakka Bible, too. You can also download the audio New Testament (in MP3 format) to your computer for free and listen to it at anytime or from anywhere you like. (I downloaded my copy last night—it took a long time, about three hours, since the files are so large.) So now you can read or listen to the Hakka Bible using your IPhone, IPad, or other mobile device, at home or on the road.

I hope you can access the online Hakka Bible. Please help us share this exciting news with other Hakka churches and friends. May God's Word in Hakka be planted in people's hearts and help change lives and society for the blessing of all and for the glory of God.

Your brother in Christ, Paul

Todd and Annika Statham
Malawi

Our four-year-old son first spotted the snake from where he was sitting on the living room floor. "Daddy, there's a dead snake on the khonde (porch)," Mio called out nonchalantly, then returned to his Duplo blocks. I wasn't so nonchalant. Snakes are not to be taken lightly in this part of the world, even when reported dead. Cobras, vipers, adders, and mambas all haunt our neighbourhood. They are highly venomous, sneaky, and sometimes lethal. So I came running. The snake was a small black mamba—the most deadly snake in Africa. But it wasn't dead, only lying dead still, having cleverly wedged itself under the open door. I grabbed a hockey stick and tried to lever out the 40-cm long mamba from his hiding place. It wasn't easy. "Now the snake was the cleverest of all the animals the LORD God had made" (Genesis 3). After a few tries, I managed to poke the snake from under our door, and with my best wrist shot, I flicked him onto the lawn. Our three dogs pounced and the black mamba was now really dead.



Poisonous snakes, marauding baboons, army ants, and the occasional swarm of killer bees are some of the dangers we experience in our garden in Malawi. On occasion, friends from back home ask us, with a touch of barely concealed disapproval, if it crosses our minds that we are putting our children at risk by living in perilous Central Africa. After this latest battle with a snake in the yard, I was beginning to wonder myself. But then a conversation with our night guard, Bernard (who guards our house from nighttime burglars, not baboons) put some things in perspective. The conversation went something like this.

Todd: "Evening Bernard. The dogs killed a mamba this afternoon over there by the khonde. Could you please keep an eye out tonight just in case there's a nest of them somewhere? Man, we hate those things! We just can't get used to having poisonous snakes near the house."

Bernard: "Yes, sir. But don't you have mambas in Canada?"

T: "No way. And no killer bees either!"

B: "Then you are very lucky, sir. So there are no dangerous animals in your country?"

T (thinking nostalgically of his home province of British Columbia): "Of course not!"

T (thinking a little bit more realistically): "Well, I guess we do have wolves. And cougars. And bears. Come to think of it, lots of bears."

B (with a look of horror): "Bears? Then I'm very sorry. I've seen pictures of bears in my schoolbooks when I was a child. They are very big indeed."

T: "No need to be sorry. Bears don't attack people."

T (again thinking a little more realistically): "Well, at least not very often."

B: "I'm very sorry, sir, I would not want to live in Canada if there are bears there. I would rather have snakes."

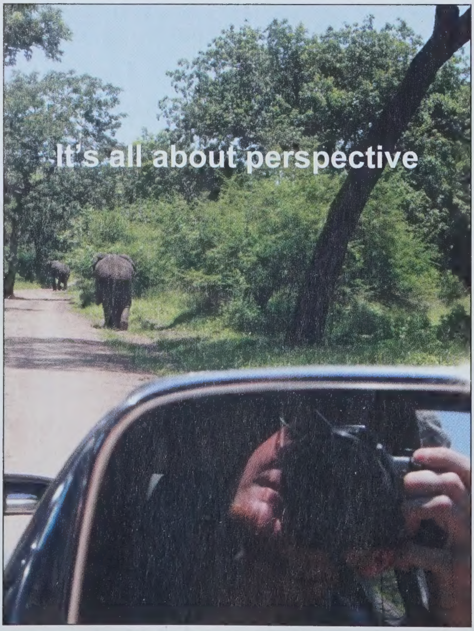
T (somewhat indignant): "What? But snakes are poisonous."

B: "Yes, but snakes run away from us. But you must run away from bears, yes? And can you kill a bear just by throwing rocks at them as we do with snakes?"

T "Um, no, I guess not…."

Living in another culture or country is to have your perspective constantly turned upside down and sideways. The unnerving proximity of poisonous snakes to my family is for Bernard no big deal—just part and parcel of normal life in Malawi. On the other hand, the notion of living in a bear-infested province like BC, which has never once struck me as strange, for him is to clearly to abandon all common sense. We grow up to think something is "normal," but if we happen to grow up elsewhere, it might be anything but. I guess any immigrant to Canada could have told me that. But for me, a born and bred Canadian, it takes living in another culture to realize that what I assume to be "just the way it is" is not the way it is for someone from another culture. And good ol' "common sense" for one group isn't always common to other people.

So what is normal? It's a question I've come to ask myself a lot! Sometimes this question amuses me. Like the time I preached out



in a village congregation. I tripped over my sermon at the sight of the half dozen or so bare-breasted women in the pews. All the while that these women were suckling infants, they were tugging their skirts down to ensure that their knees were not exposed; for here, it is showing off your legs that's immodest and not the other way around!

What is normal? Sometimes this question puzzles me. Like when my students peer behind everyday calamities and find at work the hand of the Devil and his minions seeking to harm God's people. This is fairly normal thinking here (and it's pretty normal in the Bible, too). So when and why did we in the West start thinking that "common sense" only lets us believe what we can see with our eyes?

What is normal? Sometimes this question infuriates me. Like how it can be considered normal in one culture for a family to own two cars, three computers, and a monster-sized refrigerator crammed with food while a normal family in another country lives in a hut, eats corn meal and beans, and lives off less than two US dollars per day.

As my own perspective about "the way things are" has been regularly overthrown the past few years, I've come to notice how often Jesus challenged his disciples' assumptions about what is "normal." "You have heard it said," Jesus likes to say to them, "but I tell you…." In other words, prepare to have your perspective twisted right way round! Common sense says that important and valuable folks should be first in line to enter the kingdom of God, but Jesus overrules: "I tell you, unless you become as a little child you will not enter the kingdom of God." Or when Jesus travels incognito with two men on the road to Emmaus, who are despairing because "they had hoped Jesus of Nazareth was the one who was going to redeem Israel." They already knew what sort of Messiah to expect. "Jesus said to them, 'How foolish you are … Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said concerning himself."

Living in another culture or country is to have your perspective constantly turned upside down and sideways. So maybe we who are "born from above" (John 3) shouldn't be surprised when what our Canadian culture tells us is "normal" or "just the way it is" gets overturned by He whose kingdom is not of this world.

Overseas Staff Birthdays

August

09 – Paul McLean, Taiwan
11 – Aliko Statham, Malawi

In the Society

Synodical

Knox Presbyterian Church WMS, Kincardine, warmly welcomed the 194 WMS members, who attended the Synodical of **Southwestern Ontario** Annual Meeting—and the pretty town welcomed us with beautiful weather. The Rev. Ian K. Johnston presented a beautiful communion service on our theme, Feed My Sheep. An offering of $1,900 was raised for Maternal and Child Health in Malawi.

Sarah Kim, Executive Director of the Women's Missionary Society, gave us information on the next Women's Gathering in 2014 and advised us of the Woman of Faith Award to be given out at that time. Then, our keynote speaker, the Rev. Karen Horst, gave an inspiring talk. She reminded us that the saints always had to work against opposition and cited Mother Teresa's efforts in India, which were initially met with great opposition.

Susan Clark gave her usual wonderful book reviews, which inspired those present to spend-spend-spend. The book display was outstanding.

Dinner was at the Kincardine Legion and the head table was piped in by a wonderful piper. After a delicious meal, we were entertained by the piper and his wife playing Celtic music. It was a wonderful evening.

On Wednesday, the Rev. Teresa McDonald Lee conducted a meaningful worship service and Essex Kent presented a thoughtful In Memoriam Service. Then Jonathan Lee gave a presentation on the work of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank and the Rev. Shelly Buterfield Kocis presented a liturgical dance workshop, Dancing for Him, and had us all dancing in the aisles.

The usual reports were given by the executive and the Regional Staff, and the Installation of officers was conducted by Jessie Knox.

The Annual Meeting of the Synodical of **Quebec and Eastern Ontario** was held on April 12–13 at Knox Presbyterian Church in Morrisburg, Ontario. After refreshments and registration, the meeting was opened with singing, Jesus Bids Us Shine. Catherine Blatch, President of the Brockville Presbyterial, welcomed everyone and the meeting was constituted with prayer by President Joan Hilliard, followed by the WMS Purpose.

Minutes of the 2011 Annual Meeting were approved and the executive members and regional staff presented their reports. Council delegates were introduced: Catherine Blatch, Lois Patchell, and Linda Gerry. It was noted that the Sunday

School of St. Matthew's Presbyterian Church in Ingleside raised $1,268.16 for livestock and mosquito nets in Malawi. Margaret Reynolds reported that 128 boxes of knitting had been sent overseas between 2004 and 2012. National WMS President, Joan Smith, brought Council news. She reported that plans for the 2014 National Gathering are underway.

Then, Friday evening's guest speaker, Karen Bokma from PWS&D, gave an overview of their work in 27 countries around the world. The Rev. Samer Kandalaft, Interim Minister at Knox, closed the evening with a meaningful worship service and communion.

On Saturday, Irene Nesbitt and Anita Mack led the In Memorial. Business followed. It was decided, in lieu of the Fall Synodical Meeting, members of the Synodical be encouraged to attend the Synod Conference Meeting to be held in Cornwall on October 18-19. Then Brockville Presbyterial led the Season of Prayer.

Karen Bokma spoke again on Saturday morning, this time about Building Healthy Communities around the world. The afternoon speaker, Joan Smith, our WMS National President, gave an interesting PowerPoint presentation on her two trips to Taiwan.

Anita Mack conducted the closing worship service and the installation of officers and we sang, We Are God's People, to conclude the meeting.

Presbyterial

The Annual Meeting of **Sarnia** Presbyterial WMS was held at St. Andrew's Church, Petrolia, on March 21. President Marilyn Rawson opened the meeting with thoughts on, Together We Can, Working Together to Solve Problems. Marion Perrie, from Centre Road Auxiliary, led a Bible study all about the word "ALL" and how often it appears in the Bible.

Three ladies from the London Grands, a grandmothers' organization, were the speakers. This organization, in connection with the Stephen Lewis Foundation, raises funds for the grandmothers in Africa, who are raising children whose parents have died from AIDS. A video called "Grandmothers, the Unsung Heroes of Africa" was shown. The London Grands have raised $113,000 for this cause since 2006.

The installation of officers took place with Beverley Cassel from St. Andrew's, Sarnia, becoming the new Presbyterial President.

Kim Walko, President of St. Andrew's Petrolia WMS, led the closing devotions.

Lindsay Presbyterial held their Annual Meeting on January 30 at St. Andrew's, Lindsay. As the ladies arrived, they enjoyed coffee and muffins. Then, the morning began with a singsong and President Linda Grace welcomed everyone and opened the day with prayer and the WMS Purpose.

Members of Knox Cannington presented the worship on the theme, Going Forward, Constant in Faith. (The theme for the year is Travelling the Road to Emmaus.) Then reports were read and accepted and new business was discussed. Our afternoon speaker, Tori Smit, our new Area Education Consultant, spoke on Christian Education and later installed our new executive. The Beaverton members led the In Memoriam, remembering ten members.

Linda Grace was presented with flowers and a gift to thank her for serving as president for seven years. Liz Hoyle closed the day with courtesies.

-Joy Noble

An inspiring hymn sing preceded the **Grey Bruce** Presbyterial Annual Meeting on April 4. The day began with the Walkerton WMS leading our worship service based on Matthew 6:25–34, Do Not Worry. We were encouraged to be content in whatever state we find ourselves and to have a positive attitude.

Included in the reports, were the announcements that the Gladys Simms Children's Rally will take place on May 4, and that we would no longer send knitting overseas due to the high cost of postage; over the past seven, years we have sent 15 bundles of knitting overseas. Mary Jane Bisset, our new regional staff for the synod, was welcomed, and installed our new officers. Later in the day, our new President, Pat Edwards, presented our retiring President, Elizabeth Wilson, with a Cala Lily and gift certificate.

After lunch, we were treated to a sing-a-long by sisters Veronica and Gladys Jones. They also delighted us by singing Sheep May Safely Graze. We then heard from the Rev. Dr. Ted Creen, our afternoon speaker. He spoke of the Starfish Principle, which tells the story of a young boy who came to a beach after hundreds of starfish had been washed onto the shore. The boy began throwing the

Veronica and Gladys Jones

starfish back into the ocean as a man approached and said that as there were too many, what difference could he make? The boy picked up another starfish and said, “It made a difference to that one.” We were reminded that even the little things we do, make a difference. Then Creen talked about our mission in Malawi. There is much work going on there which includes the following: Todd Statham teaching at Zomba Theological School, wells being drilled, crops bring planted, teachers travelling to teach orphaned children, and micro-financing loans being given.

Rev. Creen is now retired, but serving as Director of Huron Feathers on Sauble Beach. It has been operating since 1968 and offers worship services and day camps in their A-frame structure located on the beachfront.

The Rev Church Moon conducted a communion service to close the day.

-Eleanor Crabtree

Local

After 12 years of faithful service as diaconal minister at **Knox Goderich**, Mary Jane Bisset has accepted a new position as Regional Staff of Education and Leadership Development, Synod/Synodical of Southwestern Ontario. This position was previously held by the Rev. Ann Yee-Hibbs, who retired in 2012.

A Minister Recognition Service was held at Knox Goderich on March 10 with the Rev. Shelly Butterfield-Kocis, Moderator of the Synod of Southwestern Ontario, giving the sermon entitled, Many, Many, Many Hands!

There were several special presentations, including the Arthur Circle WMS giving Mary Jane an Honorary Membership. Her pin was fastened on by her mother Eunice Bisset and her certificate was presented by Past President Marlene Starkey, who noted that during Mary Jane’s years at Knox, she was an active participant of Arthur Circle WMS, leading in prayer, reading Scriptures, setting up tricky A/V equipment for guest speakers, bringing food for pot lucks, installing the executive, and just doing whatever needed to be done at meetings—always with a smile on her face.

Arthur Circle WMS member

Shirley Huckins read the following poem which she wrote for Mary Jane:

Mary Jane you are so dear
We'll miss having you always near.
You've been a blessing in your
ministry to us
Willing to serve without any fuss.
You served the Lord and you served
your kirk
With diligence and good hard work.
We'll miss seeing your smiling face
As we come and go about this place.
But now you move on to something new
And our prayers go with you to see
you through.
May rich blessings be on you from
God above
As you journey on with all our love.

Isobel McKeown is 104 years of age and an active member of **Drummond Hill Presbyterian Church, Niagara Falls**, and the WMS. At her 100th birthday party, she shared that as a 4-year-old girl living in Melfort, Saskachewan, where her father was a Presbyterian minister, and her mother was a member of the Mission Band, she learned about the missionaries and the people they served, and she wanted to help. Her mother let her gather eggs from their chickens and off she went selling them door to door from her little basket. The money she raised was sent off to help the missionaries. Isobel McKeown is a special lady, always with a smile on her face and joy in her heart, which she shares with everyone.

Kathy Armstrong, Wingham WMS–Goforth Group makes beautiful bed mats for Haiti (out of plastic milk bags).

Marilynn Lapp from Wingham WMS–Goforth Group with prayer shawls that are knit or crocheted and given to those in the church family as needed to show comfort and the love of God.

Remembering

Norma Burse
Beamsville WMS,
St. Andrew's
Beamsville ON

Mrs. Verna Legg
Belmont WMS
Belmont ON

Joan McLandress
Knox Presbyterian
Fingal ON

May Martin
Amos Dromore WMS
Holstein ON

Hugh Stewart
Goforth Auxiliary, WMS,
St. Paul's
Kemptville ON

Catherine Hartrick
Kenyon Presbyterian
Dunvegan ON

Marjorie Bender
Marian Halliday
St. Andrew's PC
Kitchener ON

Ruby Smith
Knox Presbyterian
Monkton ON

V. Millicent Webster
St. Andrew's Presbyterian
Women
Scarborough ON

Marjorie Evans
Knox WMS
Tiverton ON

Marguerite Hill
Osgoode PC
Vernon ON

Elsie Thrower
Knox, Welland ON

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(1861-1939)

After graduating from Presbyterian College in Montreal, Naismith decided he could have a greater impact through sports than he could in congregational ministry. In 1891, Naismith invented a new game he planned to call, "Box Ball," to teach to his YMCA gym class. When all he could find were two old peach baskets, he changed the name to "Basket Ball." Today basketball is the third most popular sport in the world, helping to erase the economic and racial barriers that separate us from one another. And it all began because one Canadian Presbyterian decided he could use his love of sports to reach a new generation with Christ's love.

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Glad Tidings

September/October 2013

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by Karen Bokma

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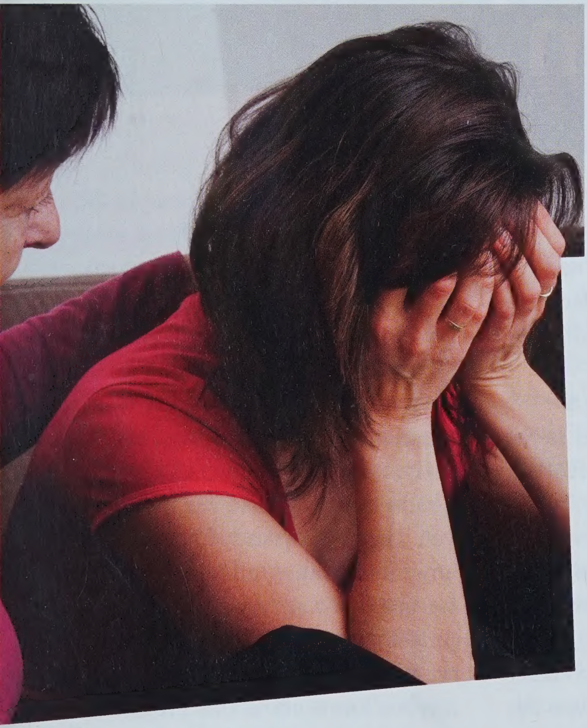
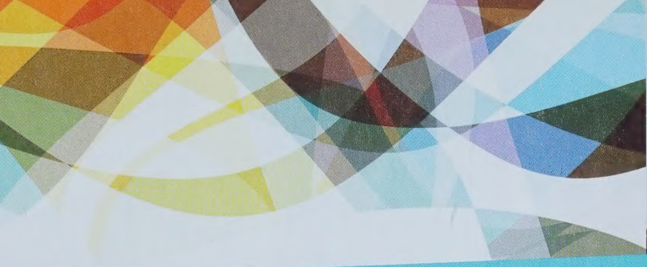
I am Not Alone

by Patricia Browne



Depression and anxiety have been part of my life in one way or another for as long as I can remember. Both of my parents suffer from depression and anxiety, and even growing up I can remember my mother saying we were "just naturally worriers." As a teenager, my anxiety grew to a rate where it was aggravating my heart murmur, and depression had become an almost constant, nearly "normal" part of my day. I had gotten to a point where I considered feeling down or sad to simply being a part of my personality.

I have depression.
I have anxiety.
I am not alone.



I will not hide this. It is part of who I am.

On June 10, 2012, my entire world got turned upside down. It was a beautiful Sunday and we had an outdoor church service in which I was dancing with our liturgical dance group, and singing with the praise team. I was attending a childhood friend's bridal shower in the afternoon, and though I wasn't feeling particularly well in the morning, I chalked it up to morning sickness, since I knew I was in a fairly early stage of pregnancy with our third child.

Having gotten through the church service, the picnic lunch, and even the bridal shower in the afternoon, I came home and was picking some things up off the floor of our upstairs bathroom when I absolutely collapsed. I felt like I had been stabbed in the stomach and it took me a full 10 minutes to make the very short distance to the backdoor, where my husband was working outside. I managed to say, "Call my parents. Call 9-1-1." and I lay down on our kitchen floor.

On the way to the hospital, the paramedics asked me if I was pregnant. I told them I was, but it was early, maybe seven weeks I guessed. I hadn't even been to see my doctor yet. They also asked if I had suffered any miscarriages, and I explained that we had lost a very early pregnancy in November of 2011, which is why we were being cautious about letting anyone know about this pregnancy. I thought then, "I'm having a miscarriage."

It wasn't until several hours later, and after a few tests that a kind, but rather hurried doctor explained to me that I had been nine weeks pregnant,

Eventually I found myself under the care of a psychiatrist and through her we are exploring ways of treatment which include daily medication.

but the baby had implanted in a fallopian tube instead of my womb. It had ruptured. The baby was gone, and there was a blood-clot the size of my hand currently growing in my abdomen. They had to operate, immediately, or it would be fatal.

I had enough strength to get my husband to call my parents and I managed to whisper to my father, "Just pray Dad, please. Just tell everyone to pray," and say 'Goodnight, I love you' to each of my little boys," though at the time I was certain that what I was really saying was "Goodbye." I was preparing myself to go into that surgery, but not to come out of it.

The next few days and weeks are rather blurred. Aside from the great pain of healing from emergency surgery, and being on a lot of medication, the depression truly settled in.

I feel that a lot of people assume that depression always manifests as a deep sadness and there are days when that is true; but for myself depression is often just a heavy, blank, nothingness. An absolute absence of everything.

I grieved, in the normal way, for the loss of our baby, for the loss of future children, and for the loss of hope. But as the weeks turned to months, I realized that this was no longer the normal grieving process.

Where a general low mood was before had become now a crushing dark depression. Where there was general worry before, now full blown panic attacks exploded. And when I was crying on the floor of our front hall because I was physically unable to leave our house to go to work, my husband said, "Maybe you need to take some time off for a while."

Eventually I found myself under the care of a psychiatrist and through her we are exploring ways of treatment which include daily medication. That in itself has become a sometimes stressful and emotional rollercoaster, but I am hopeful that we will find the right course of medication for my physiology.

The first time I met with her we talked for a very long time—about the baby, about the trauma, and about my levels of stress, anxiety, and depression throughout my lifetime. And at the end of that appointment she shared some rather frightening terms with me: Major Depressive Disorder, Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Panic Disorder, Dysthmia, and Post-partum Depressive Disorder. All of these terms could be applied to me. It was a terrifying moment, but at the same time it was a moment of brief clarity. My depression and anxiety has a name. I'm not the only one. I'm not alone. And that last thought was the most comforting of all.

Depression and anxiety can manifest in a million different ways with each person. They can be long term, as well as being exacerbated by a traumatic event, life change, or sudden issue. But with everyone I've spoken to who suffers with these issues, there is one common thread, "I just feel so alone." And here's the one tiny bit of good news—we're not.

It's been over a year now since the day we lost our baby. We have decided not to have any more children, and as much as I love my two wild and crazy little boys, I often feel like there's something missing. Like our family is incomplete. I may always feel that way. It doesn't lessen the love I have for my children, but it is simply a part of who I am. We are our stories. We are our experiences. The events of our lifetime shape and change and sculpt who we are. Part of who I am includes depression, anxiety, medication, and sometimes panic. I am working on handling those things. I am working on being better. Through all of this, however, there is one thing I am not—ashamed.

We hear quite a lot about the social stigma of mental health disorders. I will admit that it's not easy, but I refuse to let myself constantly pretend that everything is okay. I will not hide this. It is part of who I am. It is part of my struggle and my life. It has had some horrible, dark moments. It has also had some moments of bright love and light—of family and church community gathering around us, lifting us up, and holding us in the light.

For more information on mental health issues, including an assessment tool, visit: www.mooddisorders.ca

I have depression.

I have anxiety.

I am not alone.

Painting: The cat in the moonlight by Sue Miller

Nurturing Christian Community: A Matter of Heart and Spirit

by Rodger Hunter

Strengthening Christian community requires generous, and welcoming love. Love is key. Christian love, which is wide and generous, allows friends to gently gather and be healed and restored. Christian community relies on the Holy Spirit. The Spirit directs the community, and shapes it.

All of us desire to be grounded in a community, which truly meets us and cares. And when it comes to nurturing communion with those who experience mental illness, the Church of Jesus has a special calling. Much is at stake.

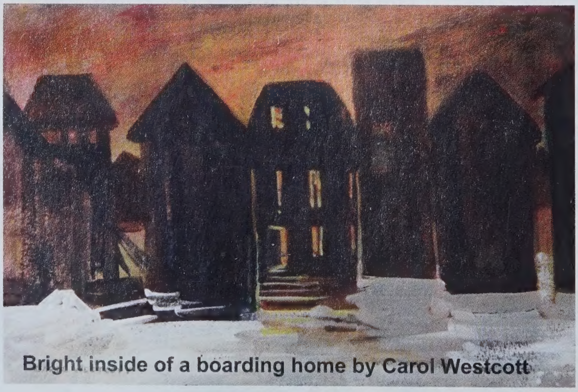
Too often in society, there is cruel rejection. The Church has love. Too often in society the gifted and important people who are ill, get demeaned. The Church can dignify those as it gathers in God's Spirit. We are all children of the high and holy God.

Over the years at Boarding Homes Ministry (BHM), we have found that the closer we draw to those who are ill, the stronger and richer our community gets. Life in Christ is shared. Life becomes more profound. Founded in 1996, BHM is an ecumenical ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada and nurtures the Christian community by linking the residents of boarding homes with visitors from congregations. Boarding homes are privately operated, for-profit businesses that house people who, for the most part, have been involved in psychiatric care. BHM does not own or operate any of these homes, but secures permission to visit in them. As regular visits are established, relationships flourish as friends share life in Christ.

Team members from around Ontario have been blessed by their visits. Their faith grows stronger. Their spiritual gifts find a release. Residents of the homes also have their faith renewed. And they get to be a blessing themselves as they spread their wit, their charm, and their considerable spiritual insights. Blessings flow back and forth in mutual care. The 2011 E.H. Johnson Award for *ministry at the cutting edge of mission* was presented to these home communities in recognition of the vital importance of intimate, small group Christian community. Truly this ministry is making a difference in the lives of both residents and volunteers.

So what can you do to build Christian community? First, your congregation can form pastoral ties with one of the *boarding homes* in your area. We believe you will be blessed. Secondly, consider ways to deepen your church ties with those right in your home congregation, who experience some form of mental illness. A lot is at stake. The quality, and the character of our Christian gatherings is on the line. These are matters of the Spirit and heart.

Finally, you can educate yourself and those within your WMS or congregation. Please ask for a copy of our new *Cat Jeoffry* Church School Curriculum. It can get conversations started. It can encourage. It can perhaps help your congregation to deepen its communion and glorify God as love is shared. Together, let's nurture Christian community.


Bright inside of a boarding home by Carol Westcott

The Rev. Rodger Hunter serves as Chaplain of Boarding Homes Ministry. To connect with him and learn more about getting involved in this ministry, email bhmin@sympatico.ca, call 416-992-4987, or visit boardinghomesministry.ca.

Mental Health and Aging

by Margaret Douglas

Depression is the most common psychiatric disorder in older adults. The individual's perception of loss of control can result in anxiety, loneliness, hopelessness, and even suicide.

Life's journey has many ups and downs but in the senior years, perhaps 75 and over, the challenges on this journey become greater. In medical parlance, anyone over 65 is geriatric, but I don't like that word now that it applies to me so I'll just say senior!

Mental health problems are not just a usual part of aging. Difficulties with mood, thinking, and behaviour are not an inevitable part of aging. Nor are they signs of personal weakness. Usually they are signs that something is wrong that requires help from a professional. Some problems due to aging can't be fixed, but there are still many things that can be done to improve quality of life. And, mental health problems can be treated. Obviously, there is not only one form of mental health problems and there is also not just one form of treatment.

Depression is the most common psychiatric disorder in older adults. The individual's perception of loss of control can result in anxiety, loneliness, hopelessness, and even suicide. Depression may cause a decrease in interest in what used to give pleasure. Depression can cause a constant feeling of low spirits and may make it difficult for the individual to connect to other people.

Serious clinical depression causes the chemicals in the brain to go off balance. Other symptoms of depression include sleep and appetite changes and anxiety. Depression is more than having a bad day or feeling sad. Life events, such as losing a loved one, moving to a smaller place or nursing home, or financial difficulties can trigger the symptoms of depression. Depression does not usually go away on its own. If you have experienced many symptoms over a long period of time, talk to your health-care provider. Many seniors can be depressed, but do not want to talk about it because they were taught not to complain or talk about their feelings. Senior men seem to especially have this difficulty, but talking is necessary.

Dementia causes a decrease in intellectual abilities, changes the way a person thinks, feels and acts, and includes a lack of memory. We all fear that we will "loose our mind" as we advance in years. Alzheimer's and other dementias increase in frequency as we age. The onset is often slow and insidious and causes memory issues, language and cognitive difficulties, and personality changes. The Alzheimer's Society has many resources for someone who has dementia of any kind, and help for their caregivers.

Delirium is state of confusion. The person may not understand their environment. The symptoms may be worse at night and may come and go. Delirium is a medical emergency caused by difficulties in brain functioning and may develop very suddenly.

Depression, delirium, and dementia can all occur at the same time. New medications are available so it is important for your doctor to know all the symptoms that are being experienced. Then, with a full assessment, decisions can be made for the best course of treatment.

The loss of intellectual abilities can be very distressing to some people. It is important to keep your brain as active as possible so keep completing your crossword and Sudoku puzzles, and enjoying your Scrabble games too. Don't get too discouraged with some 'senior's moments!' Older brains are still very competent, and in ways of reflection and creativity are even better than those of the young because experience and wisdom are added to intellectual capacity. New insights arise and growth is possible. We can finally have the time to learn something that we have always wondered about. You might enjoy writing down your life story so that your grandchildren, as they get older, will understand what it was like to live before cell phones and Facebook.

Anxiety is also common in the elderly, frequently due to the losses experienced. The loss of self-esteem, body changes, and losses related to increasing dependence, or perhaps a chronic illness can cause a person to have added levels of anxiety. Research has shown that there is less anxiety and fear related to death in those who have faith. So that should reassure those who are reading this *Glad Tidings*! There are many references in Scripture that tell us that God is with us. As a child, I had to memorize Psalm 46 that says; "God is my refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear …." There are many things that an elderly person becomes fearful of or anxious about. The loss of their life partner, expected or not, is a difficult part of life's journey. The loss of their home can be very difficult and also the move to assisted living accommodations.

Panic disorder is diagnosed when the individual has two to five minutes of severe anxiety with breathlessness and a racing heart beat. Generalized anxiety disorder is when the person feels anxious most of the time. Antidepressants, which are not addictive, can be ordered by the doctor, but they take a few weeks to work effectively. Sometimes, another medication can be given as well in the meantime. Many seniors do not need medication and will be able, with some help by a professional, to learn relaxation techniques or other ways to deal with anxiety issues. For some, just repeating Bible passages over and over will be helpful.

Retirement, and even the retirement of your spouse, can be a time of increased anxiety. For anyone who has been in a demanding job with not much time for hobbies, retirement can be a time of freedom and trying new things, travel, and new experiences. For others, filling the time can be lonely and uncomfortable. Friends at work are different now. Money might be tighter as well. If the retirement was forced rather than voluntary, this also may make a difference. Rejection, or the thought that you are not needed, can cause anger and resentment. For the spouse, freedom is more limited by having someone around all the time. Most individuals are able to adapt over time, but depression, anxiety, and loneliness may also be present for a time.

Death of a spouse is also a very difficult change in life. Several women that I have known have left their friends when their husband died and moved to the town where there children live. This has turned out well for some as they integrate into a new place easily. For others, it is disappointing to learn that their children and grandchildren lead very busy lives and really don't need grandma as much as she had expected. So often, it is our expectations that are not realistic. After the death of a spouse, it is best to take time before any big decisions are made.

How can our faith help us to cope with a chronic disease?

In the final stages of life, individuals evaluate their life by thinking about their accomplishments and failures. Those who have a more positive view of how their life progressed are more likely to cope with the changes that later life brings with more adaptability. The people who view their life as having more failures and disappointments are more likely to experience emotional problems, such as depression and anxiety. Older people, when reminiscing, may feel guilty about past failures to live up to the standards that they had set for themselves and this can worsen depression and anxiety. At times, we can let those thoughts lead us to regret rather than remembering the things that went well for us.

How can our faith help us to cope with a chronic disease? Many seniors have medical conditions that last for a long period of time or always. Arthritis, high blood pressure, hearing loss, visual or orthopedic impairment, diabetes, and stroke are all daily living challenges for many of us. Pain is often present with some of these conditions. Work with your medical team and learn that receiving assistance when you need it is a gift for the giver as well. Try to stop worrying, pray for support from your God, and release your difficulties over to Him. Often just talking with a friend is also important.

It is important to keep supportive friends, who can listen and care for each other. Friends, church, and church groups can help with loneliness and assist when the need arises. Caring for others by phone checks and conversation can help our own self-esteem as well. We all need to give and accept help at times of difficulty. So many changes occur for seniors that adaptability seems to be the most useful skill that we can acquire.

Joan Chittister has written a beautiful book called *"The Gift of Years—Growing Older Gracefully."* She has very insightful messages for the reader. Looking at the purposes and challenges of the aging process with its problems and potentials and its pains and joys, she talks about how to cope with it all. This time of life, she writes, is to make sense of all the rest. This is a time of life when we can be more alive than ever because we have learned what is most important to us. The life of a Christian is a journey of becoming the person that God wants us to be. Earlier in our lives, our spirituality guided our behaviour and it still does, but it also gives us awareness now that we will never completely understand the mystery. We can rest knowing that God is with us through all of our lives and beyond.

Margaret Douglas is a retired Parish Nurse.

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A Call to Prayer:
Caught in Traffick

by June Campbell

"Human Trafficking is only possible when it is invisible to the public eye."
Anna Rodriguez

The Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada (WICC), states that it initiates action for justice in issues that affect women. This mandate was carried out well as 82 women, and a few men, of ten different Christian denominations attended a National Gathering, called Caught In Traffick. This event brought people together to learn about the current situation regarding human trafficking in both sexual and labour slavery in Canada. The gathering was held on June 21–23 at the Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg.

In the Opening Ceremonies, National Aboriginal Day was honoured when Jeanne Paul and Jillian Harris of Northern Vancouver Island opened the event dressed in their tribal regalia which is reserved for occasions of respect. The respect was to show solidarity for our 'disappeared' sisters and to honour their Treaty One land.

Devon Clunis, Chief of Police from Winnipeg, then spoke of the philosophical shift in crime prevention through moral and social change resulting in the charging of sexual crime customers and encouraging social agencies to work with the victims of such crimes. He stated, "The faith community can galvanize change."

The first presenter was Connie Sorio, a seasoned organizer and advocate for the rights and welfare of temporary foreign workers in Canada, particularly those under the Live-in Caregiver Program. This Canadian Government Program links temporary workers to one employer for one year before they can apply for citizenship in Canada, thus making it easy for abuse to happen. This leaves some workers in sub-human conditions because the burden of proof is on the victim, who is powerless because of the repercussions. Monitoring is needed. We need to lift up these issues. Awareness is necessary in order to result in legislation for migrant workers. We can work together with other faith groups to help make this happen.

At the event, we were also privileged to hear the personal stories of two survivors, Shona Stewart and Shannon Lynn. Stewart has been enabled by her faith in Christ, and the help of others, to open Dignity House (a second-stage home for women leaving the sex trade) in Winnipeg. She left the sex trade in 1998. It was deeply moving to hear the root causes in both women's lives that led them to enter the sex trade. For Lynn, her early life in foster care was devastating, leaving her uncared for, and causing her to run away at age 11.

Stewart spoke of the stress of prostitution on the mind—that the brain goes into 'fight or flight' mode. It is negative right from the beginning. No good thing comes out of it. It was the Alpha program that led her into life in Christ. She also stated that "It happens here. It happens now. And we have to do something about it."

Lynn is now with the organization Sextrade 101 that provides help and guidance to those in the sex trade so they can get their lives back. Her self-esteem, pride, and every precious thing in her life was taken away. After 20 years of life in the sex trade, having begun at 16 years of age, she is 10 years free of it. She says that victims are younger and younger now. She closed by telling us, "Some glorify and glamorize the life, but that isn't true! Let it all stop through awareness!"

The keynote speaker at the event was Joy Smith, MP for Kildonan-St. Paul, Manitoba. She has worked tirelessly in parliament for six years to successfully change the Criminal Code, guiding two important Bills through to completion, all to do with Human Trafficking. She also began the Joy Smith Foundation, which is designed to help those who are lured into and exploited in the sex trade and forced labour. Donations are used immediately to aid victims from the long list they have of those who are in need. Smith says that greed is the motivator of this crime. She spoke of many positive things that are happening. Because of people all over the world working against this horrendous crime, the predators now have to look

A national women's gathering on human trafficking hosted by the Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada

over their shoulders. A Victims Bill of Rights is being developed in Canada. Judges and police officers are being re-trained. In April 2012, the Manitoba Government enacted The Child Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking Act, which creates a protection order for victims of human trafficking or child sexual exploitation.

Smith's son, Edward Riglin, also spoke to us. He is a police officer, who now trains others in how to deal with this crime differently than in the past. He came to us after three days of working 10 hours a day interviewing predators and victims. Both he and his mother spoke of being, at times, overwhelmed by this work. He says that mentors are important in the healing— someone who can be trusted. Many times he has seen girls change if given half a chance, but he has also seen some come and go up to twelve times. Each time they need to be treated kindly. Be forgiving, flexible, and don't give up—it is one child at a time. He also said that it is necessary to not just hear what victims say, but that it is necessary to get below their protective surface. He also encouraged us by saying,"don't think you can't make a difference—you can."

Sage House in Winnipeg's north end is a service of The Salvation Army Canada and Bermuda Territory. Their work was explained to us by Diane Bussey, Social Services Consultant on Human Trafficking. They are not there to judge, but to offer services, such as food, a shower, laundry facilities, food, and hospitality. It's hard for anyone to deal with the problems in their lives or to think of change if you don't have these needs met. About 75% of survival sex workers in Manitoba

Continue to pray for an end tc

God of love and freedom, we lift up to you, those who are not free.

We pray for those who have been taken from their own countries and have become slaves in other countries. We cannot even imagine their fear and confusion as they are in a strange land, being forced into labour and being exploited in so many ways. Bring them peace in unbelievable situations and help them to find a way out to begin the journey of healing.

We pray for those who have been forced into lives of slavery and prostitution in their own lands. Many have been made vulnerable, abused at young age, and continue to be are Aboriginal, exploited at a very young age. At Sage House, they share laughter and tears. She spoke of the buyers, every-day men, and she says trade is demand-driven, fuelled by pornography on the Internet and how women are constantly portrayed by the media. She also reminded us that women, girls, are murdered—disposable, invisible—due to a system of racism and sexism. Bussey said that more safe houses are needed—instead there is continual underfunding. The vast of majority of women do not want to be involved in the sex trade.

What are some of the needs? There is a need for prevention campaigns that provide early education about sexual exploitation. There is also a need to appeal to men, for example, in Sweden there is a billboard campaign, 'Real Men Don't Buy Sex'. It's important to have programs by men to men.

On Saturday evening, our spirits were lightened by an evening of music, dance, and food by ethnic groups. As well, on Sunday morning, an inspiring time was led by Sister Lesley Sacouman of the Roman Catholic House of Peace and a participant from Turgestan. We were profoundly moved by her acting-out the story of Hagar.

After a panel discussion and question-and-answer period, the Closing Worship was led by the Rev. Diane Guildford. Liturgical dance was part of this moving service with an inclusive Prayer to End Trafficking.

Awareness is the start. Let us not turn away from God's leading to the next steps locally and across our nation in ending Human Trafficking.

June Campbell has long been an advocate in the area of Human Trafficking. She also serves on the WMS Council Justice Committee.

Human Trafficking

used as young adults. We pray for those many young men and women who work in the sex industry in Canada. Help us to know their stories and know that many are not there because of their own choices, but because of the choices inflicted on them by others. Provide mentors and safe houses for them so they can escape their current situation.

We pray that greed will not rule our world. Reveal to us our own areas of greed in our life and help our actions to not exploit others. Give us a voice for the voiceless and help us to work for an end to human trafficking.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Thanksgiving Worship

Leadership Notes:

- You may assign one person to lead the entire service or assign one leader for each section of the service.
- Each person will need a copy of the service as there are a number of responses.
- Ask various people to read or lead a Psalm and the prayers.
- In Section One and Two of the service, there are questions for group response. Spend only a couple of minutes in this reflective time by asking two or three people to respond.
- Ahead of time, ask two or three people to be prepared to share a faith-moment when Jesus was very present in their life or a situation. These reflections will be used in Section Three, In a World of Love, Joy, Peace, and Hope.

In a World...

Call to Worship:

One: O give thanks to the Lord, for the Lord is good
All: for God's steadfast love endures forever.
One: O give thanks to the God of gods
All: for God's steadfast love endures forever.
One: O give thanks to the Lord of lords
All: for God's steadfast love endures forever.

In a World of Beauty...

Hymn #807: We plough the fields and scatter

In a World

by Lynda Reid

Read Responsively: Psalm 136:3–9

One: Give thanks to the mightiest of all lords; his love is eternal.
All: He alone performs great miracles; his love is eternal.
One: By his wisdom he made the heavens; his love is eternal;
All: He built the earth on the deep waters; his love is eternal.
One: He made the sun and the moon; his love is eternal;
All: The sun to rule over the day; his love is eternal;
One: The moon and the stars to rule over the night; his love is eternal.

Scripture taken from the Good News Translation—Second Edition, Copyright 1992 by American Bible Society.

Group Reflection: What in God's creation refreshes and revives you?

Prayer:

Almighty God, weaving wheat, the red and gold of the trees, whistling winds, all point to the mysteries of your creative powers. In our world of beauty, we remember that parts of our world are dry and barren and cannot produce much needed food; that some people destroy and defile the earth for profit only; that water, wind, and fire are often destructive. O God, we pray for your protection of our planet. May you find us a faithful partner in caring for your creation. In Jesus' name. Amen

Hymn #704: Teach me God to wonder

In a World of Community

Read: Psalm 145:1–4 (The Message)

I lift you high in praise, my God, O my King!
And I'll bless your name into eternity.

I'll bless you every day, and keep it up from now to eternity.
God is magnificent; he can never be praised enough.
There are no boundaries to his greatness.
Generation after generation stands in awe of your work;
Each one tells stories of your mighty acts.

Group Reflection: Name one person in your family or church family who shared Jesus Christ with you.

Read: Psalm 89:1–4

Leader: All through the generations of God's people, God protected and spoke through individuals and families. He also chose a nation to be his covenant people. At the right time, Jesus established the church to continue in that covenant relationship. Our churches nurture us, teach us, sustain us, and move us to be Christ in our community.

Group Reflection: Why do you give thanks for your church or WMS family?

Responsive Prayer:

One: God of generations past, we thank you for our ancestors. They built this land and this community.

**All: Generation after generation stands in awe of your work;
Each one tells stories of your mighty acts. (Psalm 145:4)**

One: Thank you, O God, for placing us in families that show us how to best live in relationship.

**All: Generation after generation stands in awe of your work;
Each one tells stories of your mighty acts.**

One: God, you alone understand humanity's weakness and failure. We pray for families that are not whole or nurturing.

All: Our God is all mercy and grace—not quick to anger, but rich in love.

One: Lord Jesus Christ, on your foundation alone your church was built. We are grateful for those who established our congregation in this place.

**All: Generation after generation stands in awe of your work;
Each one tells stories of your mighty acts.**

One: Thank you for ministers and teachers who told us Bible stories of God's faithfulness, Christ's love, and the Holy Spirit's presence that led us into faith.

All: Generation after generation stands in awe of your work;
Each one tells stories of your mighty acts.

One: Thank you for the unique gifts of our congregation. Help us to share those gifts with our community. May we always be a true reflection of Jesus.

All: I will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, forever; with my mouth, I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations. (Ps.89:1) Amen.

Hymn #484: The church is wherever God's people

In a World of Love, Joy, Peace, and Hope...

Read: Psalm 118: 21–29

Reflection: A Story When Jesus Was Very Present (This is the opportunity for those who have prepared, to share.)

Prayer:

In a world where so many walk in despair, we give thanks to you Loving God, for Jesus Christ. Through his journey on earth you showed humanity how to live in hope and peace.

In a world where so many walk alone, Jesus brought joy and love.

In a world of darkness, Jesus brought light.

In a world full of sin, Jesus offered salvation. Thanks be to God. Amen

Offering

Offering Prayer: For all we have received, we give thanks. For all we give, may it be a blessing to others. Amen.

Hymn #65: All people that on earth do dwell

The Rev. Dr. Lynda Reid is retired and loving it! She is a member of Lawrie Cormack WMS, Knox Oshawa.

This is the second of four studies on maternal health

MATERNAL and CHILD HEALTH: Afghanistan

by Karen Bokma

Opening Prayer

Pray that expectant and birthing mothers will have the care they need:

Dear Lord, the psalmist writes that you know us in our mother's womb. Be with pregnant women everywhere as they prepare to give birth. Give them a safe delivery and a healthy baby. We pray this all in Jesus' name. Amen.

Introduction

Afghanistan's turbulent history is a result of decades of regional and internal conflict and extreme natural disasters, especially drought. With a population of over 32 million, this landlocked country, at the crossroads of Central Asia, is extremely poor and highly dependent on foreign aid as it struggles to rebuild.

30%

of healthcare facilities are without any women health professionals: doctors, nurses, and midwives.

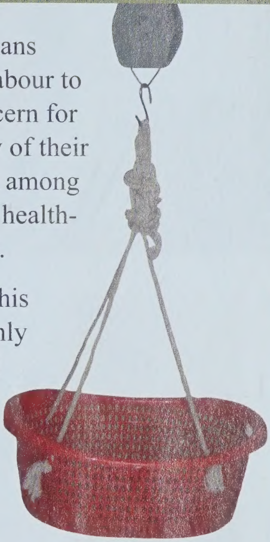
Decades of conflict have deeply shaped Afghanistan. In 2012, the United Nations Human Development Index ranked Afghanistan 175 out of 187 countries, making it one of the least developed countries in the world. Today, Afghanistan still struggles with ongoing violence, widespread poverty, drought, inadequate health-care services, and an infrastructure devastated by years of war.

About 85% of women give birth at home with untrained attendants; the number is much higher in rural areas.

Study 1 Maternal and Child Health July/August 2013

Study 3 Maternal Health in Malawi in January/Febrary 2014

Study 4 Maternal Health among Canada's Aboriginal People May/June 2014



With 75 per cent of the population living in rural areas, Afghans remain dependent on agriculture, orchards, and daily-wage labour to survive. The ability to feed their families is a significant concern for many. As a result, people take out loans or reduce the quality of their food to stretch their incomes. This translates into poor health among the population, which is further impacted by the fact that the health-care system in Afghanistan was largely destroyed by conflict.

While the situation is improving, many challenges remain. This is especially true for women and girls. War left behind not only physical devastation, but also a population severely deprived of education. Despite recent gains in education for girls, women's literacy rates are only at 12 per cent.

Widespread female illiteracy is affecting health and well-being in Afghanistan. The high population growth rate, child mortality, maternal mortality, low enrolment in formal schooling, especially of girls, and large average family sizes are all considered to be correlated to illiteracy in one way or another. Traditional attitudes constrain female literacy, which is compounded by limited access to schools.

In Afghanistan, mothers and children face some of the greatest challenges to survival found anywhere in the world. Health services across the country are uneven: pervasive socio-cultural, physical, and economic barriers impede the delivery of basic health-care. In addition, there is a lack of basic infrastructure, making physical access difficult.

The average woman in Afghanistan has more than five children. Decision-making authority within Afghan households is typically held by the eldest male, and control over decisions—including modern contraceptive techniques—are resisted, due to lack of education.

Less than five years ago, at least 40 per cent of girls under the age of sixteen

were married, even though the legal age for marriage is sixteen. Many of these marriages are arranged or forced. This leaves many women in the position of becoming pregnant before their bodies are physically ready to bear children.

Halima is 20 years old. She moved back to Afghanistan eight years ago. Her family had fled to Pakistan during one of the many periods of conflict. Halima admits that life can be more difficult in Afghanistan, but says that it is her home and things are getting better. She is scared because she is about to give birth for the first time.

Halima suffered a miscarriage 11 months ago. For her current pregnancy, she travelled to a clinic near her home at the first sign of labour pains, knowing that the clinic has a safe delivery facility, is staffed with a midwife, and she will have free access to doctors and medicine. Halima has also learned that it's safer to give birth at a clinic than at home.

Halima's decision to come to a clinic is not insignificant. Generally, Afghan culture doesn't allow pregnant women to be treated or examined by male doctors or medical practitioners and access to female health professionals is difficult. This leads to increased rates of maternal and child mortality.

Working to improve the quality of mother and child health services, as well as overcoming cultural barriers that prevent women from receiving essential pre- and postnatal care, is essential.

One Afghan child in four dies before her or his fifth birthday, many from preventable causes.

Biblical Reflection

Read the story of Jesus' birth as told in Luke 2:1–7.

How does the story of Mary giving birth to Jesus in a stable relate to the story of maternal health in Afghanistan?

How does it make you feel that Mary lacked comforts and care while in labour?

Do your feelings about Jesus' birth relate to how you feel about maternal health in Afghanistan? How are your feelings the same or different?

What Our Church is Doing

Presbyterian World Service & Development—the development and relief agency of The Presbyterian Church in Canada—is working with local partner Church World Service-Pakistan/Afghanistan to benefit 19,000 women. By helping to change community attitudes towards maternal health services, women's health status is improving and maternal death rates are decreasing. PWS&D is establishing and upgrading health facilities, as well as training community female health workers and midwives about how to deliver babies safely.

Through improved health-care services and enhanced community support,

Facts on maternal, newborn, and child health

Afghanistan

National population: 31.1 million (2013)
Life expectancy: 64 years
Rural population: 75%
Human Development Index: 175 out of 187
Maternal mortality: 1,400 deaths per 100,000 live births (2011)
Under-five mortality: 161 deaths per 1,000 live births (2008)
Infant mortality: 111 deaths per 1,000 live births (2008)

Canada

National population: 34.5 million (2013)
Life expectancy: 81 years
Rural population: 19%
Human Development Index: 11 out of 187
Maternal mortality: 8 deaths per 100,000 live births
Under-five mortality: 6 deaths per 1,000 live births
Infant mortality: 5 deaths per 1,000 live births

women are seeking and receiving prenatal care and giving birth in the presence of skilled birth attendants—increasing the likelihood of safe pregnancy and delivery, and improving the lives of children.

Men and women are learning about the importance of maternal health, nutrition, hygiene, family planning, and the benefits of breast-feeding, as well as the important role fathers play in keeping women and children healthy. Men, community elders, and religious leaders are consistently involved in the process—ensuring women receive the support and care they need.

Amina is a 28-year-old pregnant mother in Afghanistan who is receiving services as part of a PWS&D-supported maternal and child health project. Amina says, "Women are happy with the services that have started here. People are usually unable to afford proper health services and have to travel long distances to receive medical attention. If this facility had been here before, I would not have lost a previous child."

"I heard from some community members about a new maternal health clinic and I told my husband I wanted to go there," said Grana, a mother living in Afghanistan's Laghman Province. "I felt I needed to see a midwife for my pregnancy and my husband agreed." Currently in her seventh pregnancy, having experienced three previous miscarriages, Grana understands the importance of child and maternal health care.

Through the support of PWS&D, women and children survive childbirth more often, lead healthier and stronger lives, and make informed decisions that will improve their health, well-being, and quality of life.

To Think About

1. Presbyterian World Service & Development is working with local partners in Afghanistan to provide solutions to issues of maternal health. Why is it so important that local organizations and communities lead the way on these issues?
2. How many mothers or other people do you know who have had problems when pregnant, giving birth or after?
3. If problems did occur, what happened? Were doctors, nurses, and others available to help?

4. Were there any lasting consequences to the health of this person or their child?

Additional Activities

Watch this YouTube video (http://bit.ly/194SFTx) on Promoting Health in Afghanistan. Compare the experiences you see and hear about with what you know about similar experiences in Canada.

Encourage your church or community to use The Presbyterian Church in Canada's Partners in Hope: Working for Peace in Afghanistan study, so children and youth can learn more about the work our church is doing in Afghanistan.

Closing Prayer

Let us pray today for the health of women, children, and families around the world, especially for an end to maternal and child mortality, that in building healthy families, all God's people may be empowered to strengthen their communities and repair the breaches which divide nations and peoples.

Almighty and ever loving God, giver of life and love: protect the health and safety of all women in childbirth and the children whom they bear. Inspire your people to work for an end to the deadly conditions which fuel maternal and child mortality throughout the world. Help building strong and healthy families and communities, so that all may be strengthened to do your will on earth until the day when you gather us into one heavenly family. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

In Afghanistan, more than half the population lives on less than $1 a day.

Afghanistan

From May 13 to May 23, three WMS members participated in a field visit to Afghanistan organized by Presbyterian World Service & Development (PWS&D). Their goal was to see the projects that PWS&D is undertaking with its local partner, Church World Service-Pakistan/Afghanistan (CWS-P/A). It was also a wonderful opportunity to see a country where the people are struggling to attain their basic rights. CWS-P/A help underdeveloped communities gain access to these rights with a special emphasis on health, education, and food security. The organization has a long-term commitment to help women and girls in Laghman and Nangarhar provinces. While there, Janet Brewer, Betty Siverns, and Joan Smith, along with Ken Kim, Director of PWS&D, met with program staff, who were managing the projects and made field visits to observe and discuss with different communities the various food security programs, health facilities, and schools.

Here are their reflections.

Betty Siverns

After 34 hours of planes and airports, we arrived. With heads, arms, and legs covered, we cleared security and found our way to the exit. Our hosts were in the parking lot ready to greet us.

Was I back to 1986–89 and Lebanon? Shell pocked, partially finished buildings, piles of dirt, and stone ... and checkpoints! There were some new buildings, including huge wedding chapels with large parking lots—certainly a contrast with the small lean-to like shops.

The guesthouse/office was a walled compound with solid, sturdy, guarded gates. Outside of the wall was the road, a very rough, dirt street, while inside a lovely garden. Staff greeted us warmly. Too afraid of missing something, I sat down and got acquainted with our new friends instead of sleeping.

Food Security

After 30 years of war, lack of security, collapsed government infrastructure, and family displacement, food is in short supply in Afghanistan. Hunger is not unusual with almost half the population consuming less than 50 grams of protein a day. Farming in Laghman province in eastern Afghanistan means stony soil, lack of water, and poor security. The main crops are wheat, rice, corn, fruit, and vegetables. In Laghman province, the average farmer's income is about $2 a day with an average farm size of one to four acres.

One of our visits was to a village where a food security program had been initiated. We saw a group of women washing clothes in a creek at the edge of the village. The water was coming from the mountains some distance away. Water from snow melt had been directed into a "kariz" or covered canal that led to the village. It is covered to keep out animal droppings and dirt and to prevent evaporation in the hot sun, as temperatures rise to more than +40 degrees in summer. With a nearby source of clean water, the need for the women to carry water over great distances each day is gone. Here they could wash their clothes right by the village. Before this *kariz* was repaired, the women had to walk several miles every day to get water for cooking and washing.

PWS&D working with CWS-P/A, has helped by paying men to repair the waterways—resulting in water for household use while providing income for the families of the workers. A win-win situation!

We also visited a well irrigated almond orchard nursery farm. A farmer is provided with fruit tree saplings along with instruction on maintenance and care of the trees. When ready, cuttings are taken so that other orchards can be planted for other farmers. Cuttings from one row of trees are enough to plant another orchard. A farmer now owns an orchard and can sell the fruit to generate income and support his family. This nursery also produces apricots and cucumbers.

We also visited some homes while in Afghanistan. The homes are made of mud and mud bricks without windows, but with a door opening, possibly covered with a curtain. Since Afghanistan has a floor culture, there are no chairs or tables, and a mat on the floor is the bed. We were in a poor village so there were few utensils to be seen. We were also shown the tandoori oven in this home. This was a circular hole in the dirt floor, with a narrow opening for firewood. To bake the bread, a fire was lit inside the oven. When the dough is ready, it is slapped onto the sides of the oven to bake. A lid covers the hole while baking and when the oven isn't in use.

Joan Smith

Education

Although girls in Afghanistan are now legally entitled to the same education as boys, for many girls attaining an education is considered a privilege and not a right. Many will never see the inside of a classroom. As we visited schools, it was sad to see the little that the teachers and girls had to work with. In communities, it was difficult to hear the stories of how many girls are not able to go to school because of poverty, lack of female teachers, and traditional beliefs that place less value on education for girls. We learned that 50% of the population in Afghanistan is youth and only 18% of the girls are literate. It was great to hear how PWS&D, in partnership with CWS-P/A, is working to increase female enrollment and give girls the opportunity to achieve a good education. While in Afghanistan, we learned that since PWS&D support began, 26 schools have been built, more than 6000 girls are receiving an education, and more than 500 teachers have been trained.

Ayesah Hassan and Mohammad Omar Siddiqi from CWS-P/A presented an overall view of the educational system. Classrooms contain very basic materials as access to resources is very difficult. Teachers are not well educated, especially in

Photos: A. Calma, CWS-P/A

rural areas. Female teachers are only allowed to teach girls, and boys can only be taught by male teachers, although males can teach in girls' schools. Rather than teaching by rote, CWS-P/A is enhancing teacher skills in teaching methodologies and pedagogical skills. Trainers from Pakistan facilitate teacher training to develop lesson plans and provide summer camps focusing on civics for girls. They show the teachers how good relationships with the parents and Shura (religious leaders) can improve the learning environment as they realize the importance of education for girls and motivating them to send their daughters to school. One aim of CWS-P/A is to increase the number of teachers for primary schools (grades one to five), especially for girls.

In Laghman province, 52% of children ages 6–13 years are not enrolled in schools. There are only 184 primary and secondary schools with only 33% of them available for girls. Many children have to travel more than 10 km to reach their nearest school. We also learned about the importance of boys needing to be educated so that they don't join extremists groups. Many classes are held outside in the 855 schools in Nangarhar province. Of these schools, 375 have no buildings and 370 do not have water and sanitation facilities.

In one of the schools, some of the teachers had their babies and/or small children with them. This is an accepted practice to encourage more women to become teachers. We had the opportunity to talk with teachers, who had attended training workshops. They told us how beneficial this training was when they applied it in the classroom, and showed us the basic teaching materials they had been taught to use. They expressed the wish that they could receive at least three more weeks of instruction.

It was wonderful to see the smiles on the girls' faces in the classrooms and their eagerness to learn and share with us their dreams, artistic projects, and workbooks, and to discover the importance of continuing with the PWS&D Girls Education Project.

Janet Brewer

Afghanistan is a country that has been at war in one way or another for over 30 years. Wars affect governments and soldiers but they also affect ordinary people, who must continue to live and feed and protect their families under very difficult situations. Many Afghans have fled to Pakistan and lived in refugee camps for years. They weren't accepted by the Pakistanis or integrated into life in Pakistan; nor has it been easy for them to return to their country of birth until recent years.

When they did return to Afghanistan, it was to villages that lay in ruins; cities that had little infrastructure left; and seeing ordinary people struggling to find shelter and eke out a living. Imagine several generations of people being affected in this same way! We always hope for a better life for our children. Afghan parents hope for the same but until recently it was a valiant but hopeless hope.

Health Care

Health care in *rural areas* of Afghanistan is difficult to access. Clinics are spread out over the land, and people in these areas do not have access to easy transportation; in many cases they have to walk miles to get to ***any*** facilities and services they need.

In the most rural areas, people are not even able to get to the most basic services. They do not have access to clean water or nutritious food and many of the health problems that exist are a result of their living conditions. In remote areas, they have Health Posts where one male and one female volunteers are locally trained to help in the most basic ways when other access is not available.

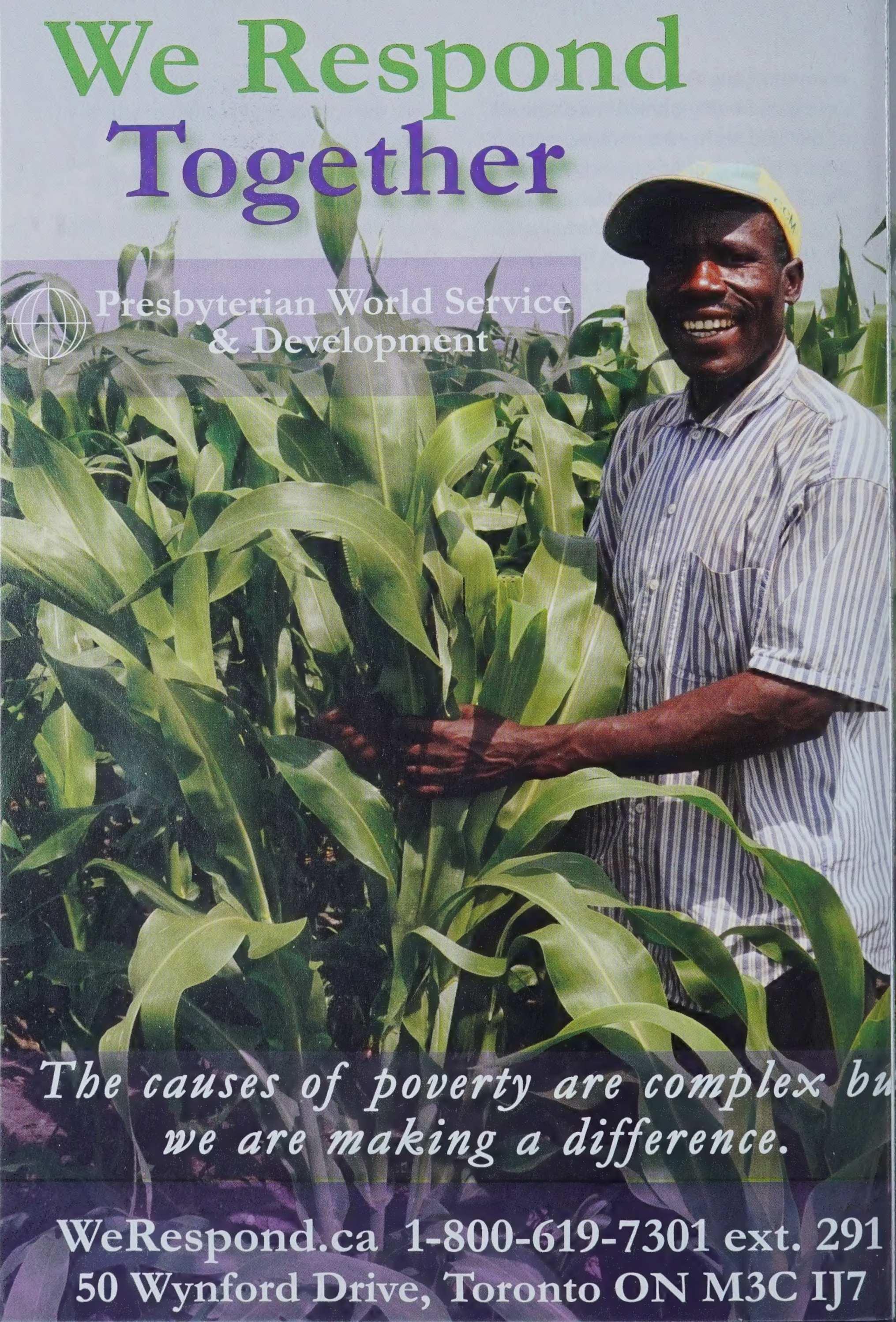
CWS-P/A administers three levels of health clinics: Sub-Health Centres, Basic Health Centres and Comprehensive Health Centres. They are available in communities before someone is referred to a District Hospital operated by the government. The Sub-Health Centres are in the most rural areas where one or two doctors, a nurse, and perhaps a midwife are available for basic health problems. In six of these areas, CWS-P/A has built (or will build) birthing areas or "maternity wards" for the women, who many times must walk 2 km or more to get to these clinics. These are the projects that PWS&D supports with our help. CWS-P/A does the work on the ground in Afghanistan, PWS&D is their funding partner, and we (along with many other people and churches in Canada) provide the funds.

Often, women, who sometimes are married when they are 12- and 13-years-old, have many children. Because of poor living conditions and malnutrition, a high percentage of women and babies die during the prenatal, birthing, and postnatal periods. Access to proper prenatal care and counselling can make a difference to these women. Trained mid-wives run courses for expectant moms by encouraging them to attend a birthing clinic to have their baby, but also training them about what is required if they cannot get to a clinic, when their time to give birth happens. Very basic birthing areas in the Sub-Health Centres are available (simply a private curtained-off area with sterilized equipment and a midwife, who knows how to help).

New moms need nutrition counseling for their babies and themselves. Just as North American women take pre- and post- natal classes so do Afghan women—crowded into small spaces, sitting on the floor, older children accompanying their moms, babies crying and being nursed—we saw all of this and realized that these women need a great deal of support, and we at the WMS can provide it through our Together We Can! for Maternal and Child Health projects in Afghanistan and Malawi.

This is the Afghanistan we visited—rural villages that were simply a grouping of broken-down mud-brick houses with barely enough shelter for a family, piles of firewood collected by hand to use as fuel for cooking and heating, ragged children playing in streets and alleys with open sewers down the centre of the walkways, widows or women with eight to twelve children struggling to make ends meet. Church World Service Pakistan/Afghanistan and Presbyterian World Service & Development are working together to help these people, primarily in the three main ways we shared: 1) education for girls, 2) sustainable farming practices and animal husbandry, and 3) maternal and child health care. These are three small ways to help but ***help they do*** and we were able to see the results of the funding for these three programs.

Photos: CWS-P/A



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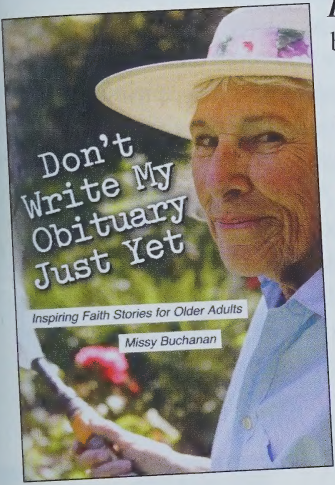
Book Reviews

reviewed by Colleen Wood


Don't Write My Obituary Just Yet
Inspiring Faith Stories for Older Adults
Missy Buchanan

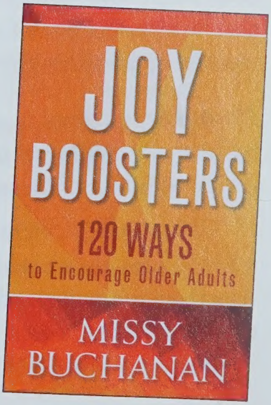
Don't Write My Obituary Just Yet
by Missy Buchanan

Don't Write My Obituary Just Yet is a wonderful collection of 30 inspiring faith stories about and for older adults. Each chapter tells the story of one individual senior, or a couple. Most are in times of transition, having moved or recently lost a spouse, or they are dealing with health issues. Some are wealthy. Some are dealing with issues of memory loss. Some are living alone. Some live in retirement communities. Some are healthy. What unites these stories is that they are all individuals of faith. And it is their faith that sustains them and gives them joy.

For example, Marlin spends his days sitting in his wheel chair. Yet, this 99-year-old has a strong faith. He spends his days in quiet worship with God, sometimes asking the tough questions, but also content in God's timing. He is at peace, and when he can, encourages others. Gwen is 79. She has been blessed with good vision and mental alertness which she uses to take other seniors on day trips. She is twice widowed, but her vivacious spirit fills her and others with joy.

Each inspiring story ends with a scripture passage and prayer and the large print format makes for easy reading.

Joy Boosters: 120 Ways to Encourage Older Adults
by Missy Buchanan



Visiting my father in his nursing home was hard sometimes. Although he remained relatively busy, it seemed that on some days he had little news to share. He had been an avid news following in his younger years, but he had lost some of his ability to do that while in the nursing home, so we rarely talked about world issues. Often, it was me sharing stories about the children, and their accomplishments, or a little about church and work, but sometimes we would just run out of things to say. If it was sometimes difficult with someone I knew so well, I can only imagine how it would become more challenging while visiting someone I was just getting to know.

Yet, this little book could certainly help me get started with confidence. It is a book of ideas, 120 of them, to help encourage older adults in their spiritual walk. It begins with some great conversation starters, such as where were you born, what did you enjoy doing as a child, and for what are you most thankful? Then it gives lots of practical ideas for ways that older people can grow spiritually or still participate in the life of the church. One suggestion involves giving an older adult the itinerary of your youth's mission trip and ask them to pray for it each day. Perhaps the adult could write something for an Advent devotional booklet? Provide a small cross for seniors that they can find comfort in by holding it in their hands. Encourage them to start a new hobby, like bird watching or learning to play an instrument.

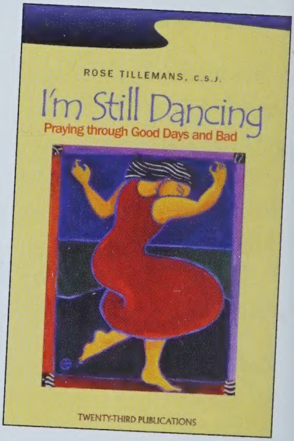
This little book would be great for anyone who visits or provides pastoral care to a senior.

I'm Still Dancing: Praying Through Good Days and Bad

by Rose Tillemans

Rose Tillemans was a nun, a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, and a deep advocate for peace and justice. She also, in the midst of her great work, suffered from depression. And she loved to dance to lively music.

Her prayers are truly inspiring. It is hard to read many of them without a sense of joy taking over you. Others turn acts of anger into calm. She truly seemed to be able to live in an optimism that is contagious. This book might find its way onto my nightstand, and would also be a perfect book for a friend, Sunday school teacher, or someone going through a difficult time.



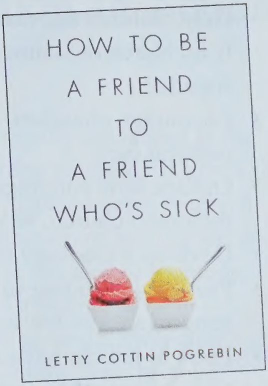
How to be a Friend to a Friend who is Sick

by Letty Cottin Pogrebin

reviewed by Rev. Emma Duncan

Unfortunately, there are very few of us who can say that we have never had a friend who has been sick and needed our support. Letty Cottin Pogrebin, an American journalist and author, has written a book that will be useful for all of us as it provides honest and practical advice.

Pogrebin wrote this book from a unique perspective—both as a patient and



HOW TO BE A FRIEND TO A FRIEND WHO'S SICK

LETTY COTTIN POGREBIN

friend. The idea for this book came while she was receiving chemotherapy for breast cancer and during the course of her treatments she interviewed fellow patients, their families, and friends. She also drew from her own experiences as a patient and friend for others.

Pogrebin rightly states that illness is the "proving ground" for friendship. It can renew or destroy old friendships as well as give rise to new ones. She addresses respecting privacy, what to say (and not to say!), what kind of help you can give, gift giving, and so much more. Her key advice is to ask and act—in other words, do not offer to do something unless you are prepared to do it!

This book is not just for people who have friends fighting cancer. Pogrebin goes beyond her own experience and talks about many difficult and tragic situations, including dementia, the death of a child, and suicide.

This book will make you laugh, cry, and cringe. You will also find yourself wishing that you had it five years ago when you were trying to support a sick friend and didn't know what to do. I recommend this book for both personal and church libraries. This would also be an excellent resource for pastoral care teams, book clubs, and clergy. This book is much needed as we navigate through our complex society while trying to fulfill Christ's mandate to care for the sick with empathy and compassion.

Cat Jeoffry Curriculum, Boarding Homes Ministry

reviewed by Rev. Rodger Hunter

Boarding Home Ministry has recently developed a new curriculum consisting of four lessons for 10-12-year-olds, four lessons for High School students, and eight lessons for adults.

Although the ultimate goal of the curriculum is to develop new teams of church visitors to link with local boarding homes, and since that is the main thrust of our own ministry, the curriculum will also help congregations to care and receive individuals, who experience mental illness. People need to feel more and more welcome in their home church.

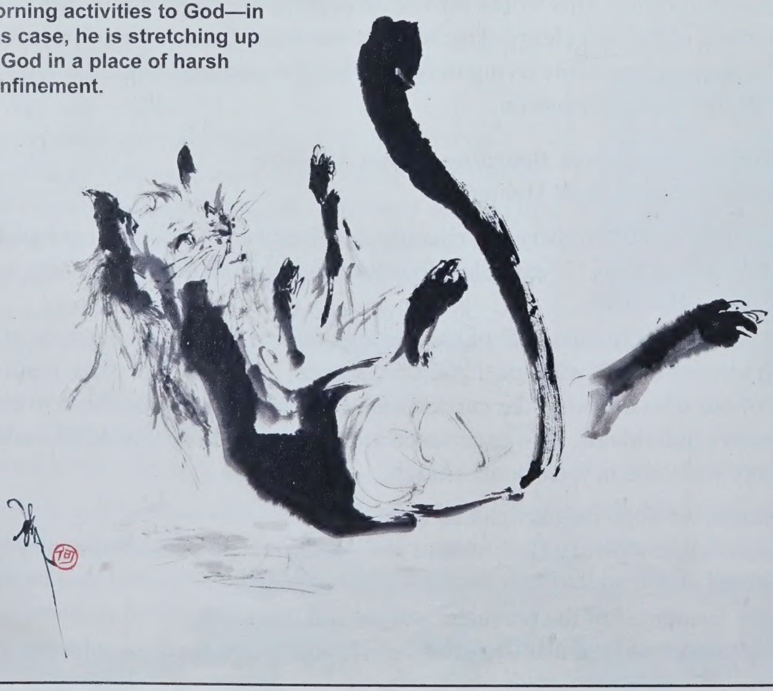
In addition, we hope the curriculum will:

- Help churches glorify God, as love is shared, and Christian community is fostered
- Raise awareness of the prevalence of mental illness
- Help children to see that Christians can joyfully care for those who are ill

- Help children see that mental illness is just another form of illness, that there is no blame or shame, and people who are ill can be warmly welcomed as friends
- Encourage churches, as it affirms that the church has a role in providing pastoral care
- Outline how congregations might engage individuals and families within their own church, who are touched by mental illness
- Develop a theology of community: welcoming, compassionate, paradoxical
- Provide grounding in pastoral care techniques that will be of value to congregants no matter their setting
- Point to the church's role in combatting various forms of stereotyping, societal injustice, and oppression that can be experienced by those with mental illness
- Present art and music which challenge the nature of God-among-us
- Highlight ways in which congregations can celebrate humanity in community

The curriculum comes with several beautiful art prints, a high-quality music CD, and study materials.

Painting by William Ho: it depicts Jeoffry dedicating his morning activities to God—in this case, he is stretching up to God in a place of harsh confinement.



A Brighter Future for Dianna

David & Anna Pandy-Szekeres

Eastern Europe

Dianna is the sixth of thirteen children born to Emma Horvát and her husband in the Roma encampment at the northern edge of the town of Nagydobrony (Ukraine). Of the thirteen children, four attended the local school for Roma children, established by the Reformed Church of the sub-Carpathian Ukraine, while the others went to the town's school. Dianna was already in her thirteenth year when she appeared at the little schoolhouse for the very first time in the autumn of 2007.

While her other brothers and sisters were enrolled in school when they were young, Dianna and her brother were not, as both were living with special challenges. Dianna's brother is deaf and mute and Dianna has a hearing impairment greater than 95 per cent. Although her parents were aware of Dianna's difficulty from a very early age, they did not have the means to do anything about it. Neither parent had any education or gainful employment. Despite receiving a subsidy from the state's social services for the two children, there was never enough money to go around. And there were of course many mouths to feed, so any income which could be acquired was rapidly exhausted in the family's on-going struggle for survival. Consequently, Dianna never received the medical attention or hearing aid she needed and was reduced to spending her early years at home.

The special school's missionary-director told Dianna that she could learn to read, write, and count. And so Dianna, who used lip-reading to understand what was being said to her, made the decision to attend classes.

For the next five years, Dianna hardly missed a day of school and poured her energy into learning as much as she could. It was not an easy task. She made painstaking progress, but the teachers provided her with the assistance she needed and her persistence was rewarded. She learned how to count to 50, identify all the letters of the alphabet, and read a combination of at least three of these letters together. She also learned to write the letters, although she was never able to compose words on her own. Instead, she copied words

Dianna and her classmates hold their new first grade readers.

in her very careful handwriting and felt the appropriate sense of accomplishment.

It was in her speaking ability that she made the most progress, having advanced from not knowing how to say anything on her very first day of school to being able to communicate freely. Even though her pronunciation was not always perfect, she was happy to have learned to speak. Like her classmates, she also learned something of the Ukrainian language and was able to recite short poems, which she had memorized.

Dianna very much liked being in school. She liked her teachers and easily befriended other children. She particularly enjoyed art class and drawing, her favourite subjects being children, flowers, and hearts, all of which she arranged nicely in her compositions. She liked to dress well and to paint her nails. She was good-natured and generally healthy.

Dianna is 19-years-old now and still living with her parents. Because of her schooling, she has a much brighter future ahead of her.

Overseas Staff Birthdays

September

16 – Denise van Wissen, Nicaragua

Glorifying God through Song

Brian Johnston

Romania

Brian Johnston, an English and music teacher at the Theological Seminary of the Hungarian Reformed Church in Cluj, Romania, shared these thoughts from one of his students, Karikas Orsolya. She is a second-year theological student at the Theological Seminary of the Hungarian Reformed Church in Romania, and a member of the school's girls' choir. She shares, "I am happy that I am one of the members of the girls' choir. It is special that in this choir there are only girls. It is a very good program for me. I think in this choir there are nice voices and we work very well together. I think it is a hobby for me, because I like singing.

In this choir we can develop, we

The girls' choir in the seminary's chapel.

Burst Forth
Isaiah 35:1–10
National Presbyterian Women's Gathering

DATE: May 16–19, 2014
PLACE: Sheraton Parkway Hotel, Richmond Hill, Ontario
REGISTRATION FEES: $350 before November 15, 2013
$450 after November 15, 2013 and before March 31, 2014
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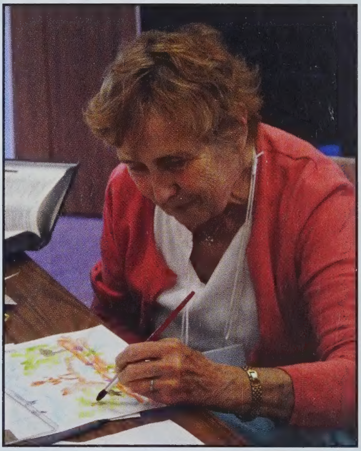
can learn beautiful songs. Through the singing we can express our feelings. Because of these things the girls' choir is important for me personally. Besides this, I like practices and performances. In my opinion, rehearsal times pass in a good and pleasant atmosphere. Sometimes it is necessary to miss some practices, but despite this we all take the choir seriously. Another thing that is important for me in the girls' choir is that everybody has the same importance and is treated with equal respect. I think we have developed a lot from the beginning. More and more practices have made it possible for us to produce a good show.

I like singing here. I like that we also learn religious songs, in which we can glorify God, who has given us all individual gifts."

Without music life would be a mistake. (Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche)

In Memoriam

by Druse Bryan



Lois Klempa at an Annual Council meeting

We give thanks for the life and witness of Lois Klempa who died on May 19 2013.

Lois Elizabeth (Stewart) Klempa was born in Cobalt, Ontario. She graduated from Ewart College in 1958, married, and with her graduate student husband Bill, lived in Cambridge, Edinburgh, Basel, and Gottingen.

On her return to Canada, she cheerfully assumed the duties of a minister's wife as well as family life with three young children. She was an enthusiastic member of the WMS and over the years served in executive positions at the local, presbyterial, and synodical levels. Her theological training and experience were valued and she was active on many of the National Executive Committees. When the Society celebrated its 75th anniversary in 1989, we turned to Lois to mastermind the event and a few years later, when it was decided to record the history of the society, Lois was approached to take on this daunting task. And take it on she did—it became a labour of love for her and she truly lived up to the book's title of 'Certain Women Amazed Us'.

An adjective often applied to Lois was 'feisty' and she was. A strong feminist, she upheld the rights of women in society, promoted inclusive language in the church, and was an advocate for women in ministry. In 2004, in recognition of her many attributes, Knox College honoured her with a Doctor of Divinity degree.

I was privileged to have her as a friend. Always bright and cheerful, she was a joy to work with—organized and focused, but always ready to ease up and enjoy a good party. By the late 1970s, her home was in Montreal and we became good friends and discovered we shared many interests. We collaborated on many projects over the years and also did quite a lot of travelling together to various conferences, Council meetings, and retreats and the conversations never lagged. Just three weeks before her unexpected death, we travelled together in a snowstorm to Morrisburg, Ontario for a Synodical meeting. She had been out of the WMS picture for a while with her health problems and it was heartwarming to see how she was welcomed by all her friends.

An amazing woman, a true friend, and a dedicated WMSer. She will be missed.

Presbyterial

On a glorious day at the end of June, more than 250 women (and some men) of the **Huron-Perth** Presbyterial, enjoyed Cake By the Lake, at Camp Kintail, on the shores of Lake Huron. It was the camp's way of saying thank you to the WMS groups, who support them throughout the year. Camp counsellors conducted tours of the beautiful grounds, and a hot lunch was served, followed by a short worship service in the outdoor chapel, which overlooks the lake. A truly wonderful day was enjoyed by all.

Maitland Presbyterial held their Spring Rally in Molesworth on May 27 with the theme, Dress Yourself with Strength.

A lovely variety of desserts was served by the Molesworth afternoon and evening groups. The meeting began with a lively sing-song, and then Marj Deyell and Mary Simmons led the Worship Service. Scripture was taken from Psalm 31:10–31. Mary Simmons spoke very eloquently about the "Wife of Noble Character" being a virtuous woman having both physical and spiritual strength.

Margaret Eadie, our guest speaker, shared her experiences from her mission visit to Southern Sudan. A group from Wesley Knox Church, London, went with Canadian Aid for Southern Sudan (CASS). This group assists the war-ravaged people of Southern Sudan as they continue to suffer untold hardships, such as slavery and a lack of educational opportunity. The objective is to build schools, rehabilitate child soldiers, provide training for future leaders, assist in abolishing slavery, and promote full gender equality and human rights.

London Presbyterial held their May Retreat on May 2 at the Backus-Page House Museum, South of Dutton, Ontario. President Valerie Shaw welcomed everyone and a sing-song began the day. It was our pleasure to have Mary Jane Bisset, Regional Staff for Leadership and Development, join us and bring greetings.

Guest speakers for the morning, Bonnie Rowe and Ruleen Lilley gave an informative presentation about

the Dutton Dunwich Barn Quilt Trail Project. Five counties in Ontario have barn quilt trails. The trail consists of barns that have an eight-foot-square quilt block posted on them. Each of the decorative markers signals a historic or other point of interest.

Our afternoon speaker, Tracy Gordon, spoke about undergarments worn by women in the 1700s to 1900s. She also was able to show many examples of her craftsmanship from her work as a re-enactor seamstress.

Our worship service consisted of a Prayer of Thanksgiving and a mini-skit between St. Francis and God. We closed with a prayer and singing For the Beauty of the Earth.

-Elaine Brown

Brockville Presbyterial met for their May Rally on May 30 at Knox Church in Iroquois. A silent auction of baking was set up to raise funds for the Cariboo Ministry and Malawi.

Catherine Blatch, president, welcomed us and opened with prayer. Mary Moorehead then led worship on the story of mission, beginning with the great commission from Jesus to his followers to tell the good news that Jesus' love was for everyone. Mary, along with Margaret Reynolds, also conducted a Bible study on A Holy Nation from 1 Peter. We discussed what makes the church different from the world, and then they tested us on trivia about mission in The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Our afternoon speaker, Margaret MacGillivary, spoke of her trip to the Dominican Republic with Care International's Lighthouse School Project. After a month of preparation, they arrived for one-week to work on a dormitory for teachers. The team had to work on a rotation of four people since the temperature was over 30 degrees Celsius. They built walls with cement blocks and mortar, and painted the walls, floors, and ceilings.

The **Lanark-Renfrew** Presbyterial June Rally took place in Arnprior on June 8. President, Lois Patchell, constituted the meeting with prayer and Margaret Hughes welcomed us.

Mary-Lynn McConnachie led the devotions, called A Beautiful Woman in Christ. In her early morning clothes, Mary-Lynn related the various items we use (cleanser, moisturizer, wrinkle cream, foundation, eye make-up, lipstick, blush, hand lotion, foot therapy) to enhance our outward appearance. She emphasized that being beautiful in Christ involves the inner, not the outer, kind of beauty, and she then recited a scripture verse which related to each aspect of inner beauty.

Margaret Sams gave a touching tribute in honour of Lois Klempa whose memorial service in Montreal was taking place at that same time. She read Psalm 46 and thanked God for the years Lois, and all of us, are given to serve Him. We closed the memorial with prayer and singing, For all the Saints who from their Labours Rest.

Offering was taken and the Thanksgiving prayer was led by Tilana Knoetze. She also presented the four recommendations made at Council.

Local

Margaret Taylor was honoured for her great contribution to **Knox Presbyterian Church Burlington** with a portrait at the Mission Awareness Service on April 28.

Margaret Taylor was instrumental in organizing the WMS Evening Auxiliary and became its first President in 1951. As well as being an inspiration to the members of the evening auxiliary, Margaret revived the CGIT (Canadian Girls in Training) in 1955, sang in the choir, was a member of the Group D of the Ladies' Aid, led a teenage Sunday school class, and was involved in the first congregational visitation.

Carolyn Wilkins and Margaret Taylor

In 1957, Margaret and her family moved to Belleville, Ontario. The name "Evening Auxiliary" was then changed to the **"Margaret Taylor Evening Auxiliary"** in her honour. The auxiliary also presented Margaret with her "Life Membership."

The **Marion Ritchie** WMS of Cromarty Presbyterian Church celebrated their 100th Anniversary on May 26. Cromarty's first group began

on July 1903, when Amy McPherson formed a Women's Foreign Mission Society. In 1913, Marion Ritchie helped to organize the Young Mission Band, which changed its name in 1936 to honour her.

Several hymns were sung and a delicious pot-luck lunch followed. The meeting closed with prayer and a reminder that the Fall meeting is on September 16 in Renfrew and everyone is encouraged to attend the Synodical Mission Conference in Cornwall on October 18 and 19.

Other News

On June 11, a small group of concerned people had a special meeting with David Phillips, the National Presbyterian Animator for The Presbyterian Church in Canada at West Point Grey Presbyterian Church in Vancouver. David was in Vancouver for preparations for the Truth and Reconciliation Vancouver National Event to be held in September.

This meeting focused on a perception that there has been a lack of pastoral concern for former teachers and workers at the Residential schools run by our Church. Earlier this year, one of the groups was alerted to this perception by a Diaconal Minister, who had served at the schools.

It was noted by those gathered that this concern first surfaced when an early draft of the PCC's Confession was introduced at the General Assembly. Many, including former staff, felt that those who had worked at the schools were all being "painted with the same brush" as those who had perpetrated the physical and sexual abuse at the schools.

To correct this perception, the draft accepted by the 1994 Assembly included the third paragraph which acknowledged that "there were many … who, in good faith, gave unstintingly of themselves in love and compassion for their aboriginal brothers and sisters …." The Confession concluded with a promise to "seek opportunities to walk with Aboriginal peoples to find healing and wholeness together as God's people."

The follow-up to this promise was the adoption by the General Assembly of the Journey to Wholeness Program, including a Healing Fund. Several healing initiatives have been undertaken over the following years. Fourteen years later, in 2008, the Federal Government presented its " Statement of Apology—to former students of Indian Residential Schools." The cornerstone of the Statement Agreement was the establishment of The Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The TRC was mandated to hold seven National Events, and many regional hearings across Canada to hear the stories of the survivors.

Throughout the years since our Confession, the truth telling and

In Remembrance

June Hill
Evening Auxiliary,
Avonton Presbyterian
Church
Avonton ON

Dorothy Lowry
St. Andrew's Presbyterian
Church,
Carleton Place ON

Joan Kerr
Bobbie O'Bee
Dr. Margaret Strang
Auxiliary, First PC
Chatham ON

Norma Jackson
Annie Purves Group
WMS, St. Pauls
Port Hope ON

Kathryn McCormack
St. Andrew's
Swinton Park ON

Marion Berry
Myrna Smith
Thornhill WMS
Thornhill ON

Pauline Fraser
Knox Church
Vankleek Hill ON

reconciliation process has rightly centred on the students, who survived the abuses at the Residential Schools. The tragic legacy of their experiences must not be minimized. The healing of the survivors and their descendents will take many years of rebuilding relationships and many miles of walking together. At the same time, as WMS/PCC members, who commissioned fellow Christians to serve the Aboriginal students and their families in Christ's name, we have a pastoral responsibility to support the surviving former staff as they continue to suffer their own pain, which has been compounded by being unjustly lumped in with the abusers.

The Vancouver gathering wrestled with ideas for some concrete ways to help address this pain. We agreed that there are some untold stories that need to be told in order to create a more comprehensive and holistic historical record of the Presbyterian Church's relationship with our First Nations sisters and brothers. The group agreed to seek such stories from both former students and staff, stories which might include some of the moments of grace and acts of compassion that were part of their years spent at the Birtle and Cecilia Jeffries Residential Schools.

We are asking for these stories. We pray that the recording and sharing of these stories will give some affirmation to the years of sacrificial service by former staff, both those living and the many who have passed on, just as we pray for true healing and reconciliation among all those affected by this tragic period in Canada's history.

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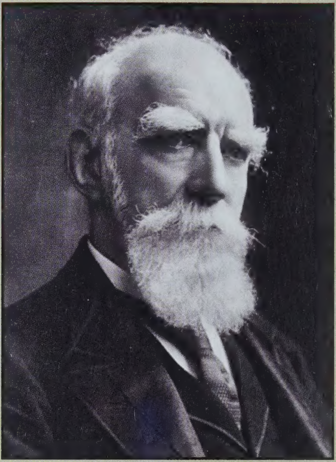

Lord Strathcona

(Donald Smith) 1820-1914

Moving to Canada when he was 17 to become a fur trader with the Hudson's Bay Company, this Scottish Presbyterian rose to become the company director. His dream to connect Canada via railroad became reality when he drove the last spike in 1885. His other contributions included:

- building the Royal Victoria Hospital in Montreal
- providing scholarships for the first women to study at McGill University
- supporting the new scouting and cadet movements in Canada
- leaving generous bequests for McGill University and Presbyterian College.

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Glad Tidings

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Glad Tidings

November/December 2013
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DESIGN: Alexis McKeown
CIRCULATION: Alana Martin

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The Women's Missionary Society (WMS) has long been a place of opportunity. Its very inception was based on opportunity. When it began, the opportunities for women to serve and make decisions were limited. When the WMS began, women could not vote, working outside the home was frowned upon, and women could not be ordained as elders or ministers. It was within WMS groups that women had opportunities to serve, take on leadership roles, conduct business meetings, and support mission staff. (Certain Women Amazed Us) Today, the WMS still provides a place for women to take on these roles. For some, it still provides a training ground for roles outside the WMS. Others—many—come into the WMS with amazing experience and leadership skills and share these skills in abundance.

It was, and is, certainly a place of opportunity for me. It was one of the first places where I got to practise my drama skills, participating in meetings as a child. It was the place where I got to sing my first ever duet. I still remember how exciting it was to sing at the front of St. Matthew's, Ingleside, for that Presbyterial worship service. I expect there were others more 'qualified' and with better voices, but the WMS let this young high school girl share her gifts. As a young woman, the WMS allowed me to speak about Youth in Mission, Canada Youth, and Synodical Youth Ministry.

And now, the WMS is giving me the opportunity to travel to India as their staff. I write this about two weeks before I depart and I am anxious and excited. Our group is diverse and wise. I know I will learn as much from this group as I will learn from our mission partners. I feel a little rusty—my last mission/exposure trip would have been about 15 years ago. I feel a little nervous—India is a long flight and a long way from my husband and children. Yet, I am so thankful for this opportunity. I also want to use my leadership skills and to represent the WMS well. An opportunity.

Every day, we are faced with opportunities. During this time of the year, we think of Mary and the great opportunity she had to be the mother of the Messiah. She was ready, but scared. She was ready, likely wondering how this could be. She was ready, to share her gifts. She was ready, to be counter-cultural. Like Mary, be ready to serve and boldly enjoy your opportunities.

Colleen Wood

India Fall 2013

by Colleen Wood

Brother Sister Let Me Serve You

We talk a lot about mission partnership these days. It is something I have thought and pondered countless times, but I think I truly experienced it in India. Friendships run deep between the Women's Missionary Society (WMS) and the people in the Vindhya-Satpura region of India. Countless members of the WMS and The Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC) have made the long journey to visit, learn from, and celebrate with our friends in India. Individuals from this region, including Padre Emmanuel Ariel, one of our hosts while in India, and Miss Flora Kalib, Principal of the Masihi High School in Jobat, have also made the long journey to visit, learn from, and celebrate with us in Canada.

This partnership began in 1889, when the Dr. John Buchanan first arrived among the Bhil people, later settling there with his wife, Dr. Mary McKay. If you grew up in the PCC, like I did, you likely have heard of the Bhil Fields and the work of Dr. John Buchanan. Since then, many more Canadians have gone to serve in this area. Names such as Bessie MacMurchy, Margaret Kennedy, and Isabel McConnell are known by many in the WMS. Today, many within the church are aware of the work of Canadian nurse, Pauline Brown, who is currently retired and continues to live in Jobat.

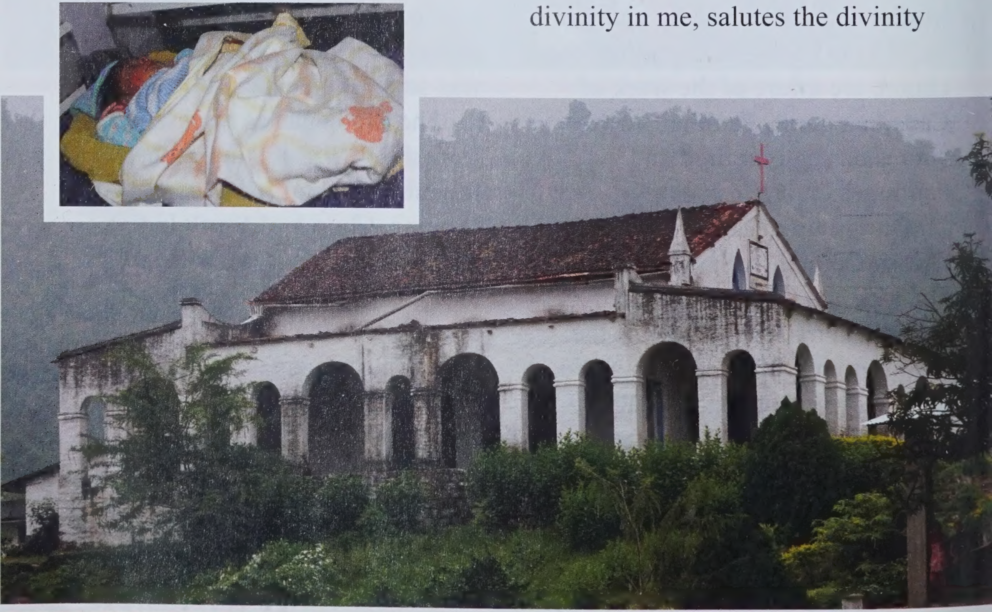
Our group of 12 women from British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Ontario, and Quebec, travelled to India in mid-September as the final step in a WMS Together We Can! project that began in 2008. The project was selected after a WMS Mission Exposure trip in 2008. During this trip, the women became very concerned about the poor conditions of the school hostel in Jobat. Children, who live too far to return home each evening from school, live in the hostel. As the original hostel was not contained in the compound which housed the school, hospital, and some staff accommodations, safety was a concern. Washroom facilities were primitive. The children slept on small mats on bare concrete floors with inadequate bedding and sacks of food stacked in their room.

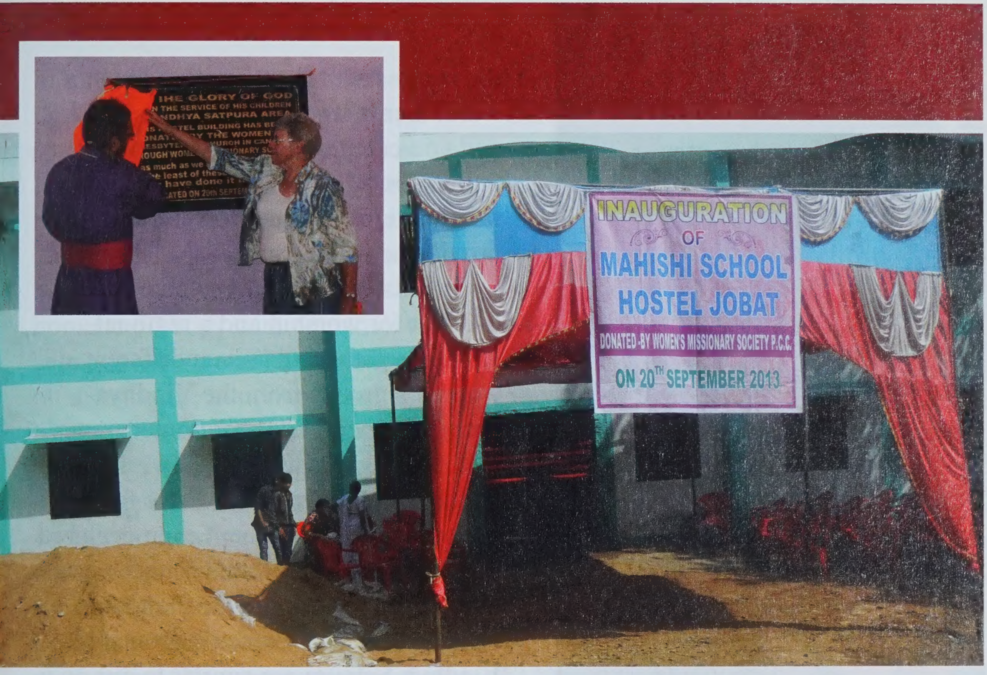
The women had a dream to build a new hostel for the children in Jobat, and Together We Can! was launched. Under the direction of the national WMS, individuals, WMS groups, and congregations came together and raised over $160,000 for the hostel. Although the building process took longer than hoped, especially to secure the necessary permits, the inauguration was set for September 20, 2013.

The day began as representatives from the WMS, and the Right Reverend Bishop Ali (Bhopal Diocese, Church of North India) cut the ribbons and we were able to enter the hostel for the first time. The Bishop also spoke of the youth being the pillars of the church. Not all the children who will be living in the hostel will be Christian, but they will all participate in the Sunday School. Our hope for the future is that the love we show will bring them to Christ.

It was wonderful to see the bright interior and watch the children from the school run through it excitedly. The hostel interior is not quite complete, due to heavy and long monsoon rains this season, but the contractor assured us that it would be finished by November or December. Already we could see that this hostel was in a safe location within the Jobat Christian compound, and that it contained bright and spacious rooms with bunk beds—no more sleeping mats on a concrete floor—with a separate washroom and cooking area. The day continued with entertainment by many groups of students showing their talents through song and dance. We were again welcomed with garlands, food, and a beautiful necklace—a lovely reminder of a great celebration!

Although the purpose of the trip was the inauguration of the hostel, our group was blessed to see many other projects throughout this region in India. We began our travels in Indore with a visit to the Graduate School of Nursing, Middle Indian Board of Education. What a welcome we received! We were adorned with garlands, entertained with drumming, singing and dancing, and enjoyed a lovely meal. The principal shared the meaningful words with us, "The divinity in me, salutes the divinity





in you." She also shared the motto of the school: Excellence in Education, Excellence in Practice.

On the following day, we travelled to Hatpipliya to visit the community development programs currently funded by Presbyterian World Service & Development. We heard of successful small businesses that were being started by women. We saw gardens and the start of their vermiposting program. We also visited a school where the children demonstrated how to effectively wash their hands. We were welcomed by the women of the area and gifted with some lovely woven baskets and fans. We also visited the Christian hospital in Hatpipliya and were once again welcomed by beautiful words, garlands, gifts, and a meal. The hospital is well regarded and serves patients from a large rural region.

As you visit the hospitals, churches, and school in the Jobat region, you see the name of the WMS and PCC on plaques everywhere. We began our day in Jobat at the Jobat Christian Hospital that has three doctors, and a total staff of 120. They see about 60 patients everyday who pay a small fee, but they do not turn away patients who cannot afford this fee. The hospital is dark and basic by our North American standards, but the patients seem well cared for by

Jobat. Partners.

The Hospitality

the many staff. They have a women's ward, men's ward, and children's ward, and you can pay for a private room. Patients receive one meal a day, and family members are often present to provide additional meals.

We also visited the red church in Jobat for worship and a regional women's gathering. Seven different women's groups from the Vindhya-Satpura region were represented. The day began with rain showers which made the travel horrible for the women—the government even declared a holiday because of the weather—yet still over 50 women made the trek to welcome us. The women's groups in Vindhya-Satpura are similar to our own WMS groups. They enjoy worship, fellowship, and raising funds to help others. They also believe strongly in the importance of Christian teaching for their children and grandchildren. They asked for our prayers, and we assured them of our prayers, and also asked for theirs.

On our visit to Amkhut, we all commented on the beauty of this area. It is here where Dr. Buchanan first settled

in India. There are three hills in the compound area. One holds the church, the other the old home of Dr. Buchanan, and the third the mission residence. We visited the church, the school, and the school hostel. The hostel currently is home to 50 boys with one adult to supervise them all. The boys sleep on mats on the concrete floors. There is a hostel that International Ministries of the PCC has built, that will be opened shortly.

Before heading to Delhi for two days of sightseeing, we enjoyed a dinner and a tour at the Indore Christian Hospital and their School of Nursing. We were reminded that the hospital began as a mission of The Presbyterian Church in Canada in 1887. It is currently under The Synodical Board of Health, Church of North India. They currently have a very strong mother and child health program and excellent nursing care.

In many ways, the words of Pauline Brown come to mind as I reflect on my trip to India. "My heart is very full. We are sister in Christ." Indeed, there is a feeling that this is family, that our friends in India are our brothers and sisters in Christ. While we were there they did treat us as family, sharing with us abundantly by providing us with wonderful food, transportation, accommodation, and even gifts! I pray that we will continue to partner with our friends in Vindhya-Satpura and that our hearts will continue to be filled.

India Impressions

In some ways, India is what you expect, a country full of contradictions. Even our accommodations reflect this. Our hotel in Indore is bright, modern, and clean, what you might expect from a three star hotel in Canada. We have constant electricity, air conditioning, and hot water. The downstairs restaurant is clean and bright with excellent service.

Moving on to Jobat, we stayed in the mission residence. This is much more basic. Although we

Current Together We Can Projects

Canadian Aboriginal Ministry: Saskatoon Native Circle and the Cariboo Presbyterian Church, Maternal Health in Malawi, Maternal Health in Afghanistan

Past Together We Can! Projects

Jobat School Hostel, School Supplies for Eastern Europe

For more information or to support these projects, please contact the WMS office.

have running water and electricity, we do experience power outages and there is no air conditioning, although the ceiling fans help to make it bearable! We do not have running water in the showers, but are excited every morning when we receive three buckets of steaming hot water. Mixing a little of this into a second bucket, and using a small cup, we all start to look forward to our morning 'cup 'o showers'. The monsoons have gone long this year, and after a few days of rain, we see that the water has begun to enter our residence. Thankfully, it is only in two of three washrooms and has avoided our sleeping areas, but everything is beginning to feel damp. This is all bearable due to the wonderful hospitality of our hosts.

Our final accommodation in Delhi is basic, a hostel. It is reasonably clean, but I did notice a small rodent scurrying across my room one night. Most of our rooms have hot water and window air conditioners, though my air conditioner stopped one night with a loud bang! The restaurant is incredibly slow, but still nice to be on site so that we do not have to travel for our morning tea and toast.

Noise is something you just begin to get used to in India. On the roads, you almost become thankful for the sound of the horns. The roads are filled with cars, motorcycles, scooters (sometimes with entire families perched on one vehicle), auto-rickshaws, buses, dogs, goats, and cows. Yet, even amidst what looks like chaos, people seemed to get around.

The people of India are beautiful. You will see women in the most colourful saris and salwar kameez everywhere—working in the field, walking through a crowded market, dancing in church, or sitting sideways on the back of a scooter. Men are dressed in jeans or dress pants, often with a crisp cotton shirt, although in the Jobat area, many of the men were in a more traditional Bhil dress.

In India, you do see extreme poverty. People living in make shift houses, some with brick walls and tin roofs, some with thatched walls and plastic covering the top, and others in tent-like dwellings. Yet, we were welcomed with extreme generosity. Everywhere we went, we were given gifts: pashmina scarves, vases, or bed spreads. Everywhere we were fed in abundance: rice, chapattis, chicken, and curried cauliflower or lady's fingers (okra).

Finally, amidst the poverty, you see a growing technology industry in India. Everyone has cell phones. I had better cell phone coverage in India than I have experienced in parts of Canada. There are many technical schools and we saw the names of some North American tech giants on buildings in Delhi. Seeing this, I wonder what the future will be for India. Knowing a little about development work, I worry about the people far from Delhi, in the region we refer to as the Bhil fields. I trust they will not be forgotten.

TO OUR DEAR
CANADIAN FRIENDS
FROM - MASIHI HIGH SCHOOL JOBAT

Christmas Memories

by L. Marie Enns

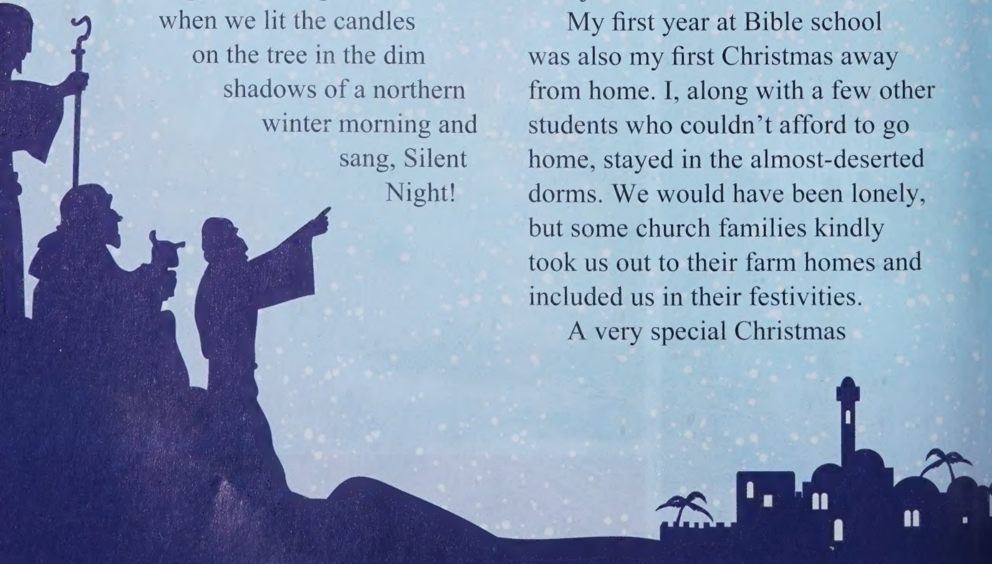
All through life, there has been Christmas. At different ages, in various locations, and in diverse circumstances, I have found Christmas a most special time of year. As well, there is a continuity to it, as from one Christmas to the next we have memories of the one past and then anticipation for the one to come. More importantly, the message of Christmas received and acted upon permeates our entire lives.

As a child, I revelled in the simple, but so sublime celebrations in our log house on the homestead. No electric lights can evoke the atmosphere we experienced when we lit the candles on the tree in the dim shadows of a northern winter morning and sang, Silent Night!

Who can forget the excitement of the Christmas concerts we produced in both church and school? After spending weeks learning carols and recitations and rehearsing plays, we could hardly wait for those magical nights to come. Once, when practically everyone in the district was at a school concert, my uncle's house caught fire. He and the neighbours, driving home with horses and sleighs, extinguished the fire. Still, there was enough damage so that my uncle, aunt, and cousins stayed with us for several days. It was fun to have them with us for more than just Christmas dinner.

My first year at Bible school was also my first Christmas away from home. I, along with a few other students who couldn't afford to go home, stayed in the almost-deserted dorms. We would have been lonely, but some church families kindly took us out to their farm homes and included us in their festivities.

A very special Christmas



memory is from the year I attended teachers' college in Saskatoon. My brother came from medical school in Winnipeg and took me to the only live performance of Handel's Messiah I have ever experienced. When the choir sang, "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace," it seemed we couldn't get much closer to heaven than that, while on this earth.

Then there were the Christmases after I was married, when it was so wonderful to go home and eat my mother's cooking again instead of trying to concoct my own meals! The Christmas after our first child was born, my parents were with us. Having this new baby, gave me a much clearer understanding of Mary's role and the prophet's words, "Unto us a Child is born. Unto us a Son is given."

As our own family increased and as we moved further north, we spent more Christmases at home and developed our own traditions. It was a chore to get the turkey stuffed and into the oven on time for me to join my impatiently waiting family for gift opening. Being the mom with responsibilities is not as much fun as being a carefree kid, but after all my mom had done for me, I wanted to make good memories for my children too.

As our children matured, the time came when they arrived home for Christmas from Bible college, bringing tapes of beautiful Christmas music they had heard or participated in. As well, we often practised carols to sing at the local church service, even if we had to devise a way for two bass voices and a soprano voice to harmonize.

My most sad Christmas ever was the one that happened a month after my dad's funeral. The carols afforded a sort of bittersweet comfort as I noticed for the first time that many of them make reference to heaven.

At our daughter and son-in-law's in Vancouver, we experienced a Christmas with green grass and gray skies. However, visiting them on Vancouver Island another year, we had snow. Some of our Christmases have also included a grandson or two. It was more fun watching their antics with their new toys than opening our own gifts.

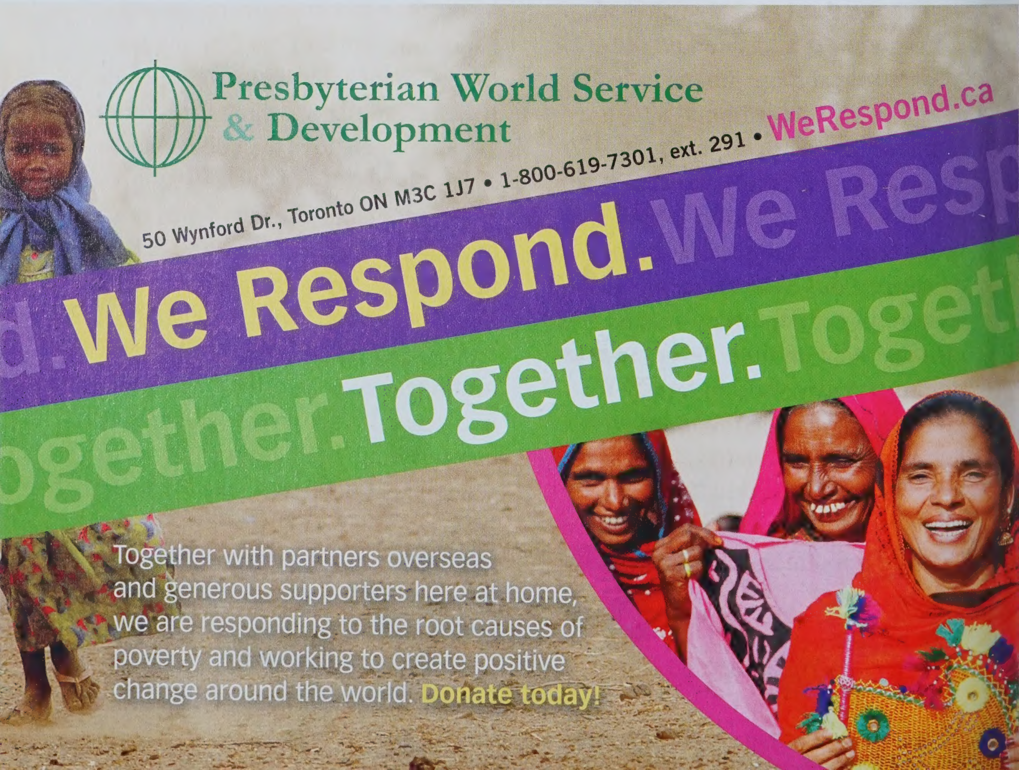
Finally came the year when not one of our children came home, but my sister's family included us in their Christmas dinner. A few days later, we visited my brother, whose health had been deteriorating for five years. In a desperate attempt to comfort him we sang some German songs like, O Du Frohliche (O You Joyful) and Gott Ist Die Liebe (God is Love). The old sounds from his childhood affected him emotionally, but he wasn't able to tell us what he was thinking. As usual, I left with a heavy heart, not knowing if we had made him feel better or worse, or if he knew I was his little sister wanting so much to cheer him in his misery. One and a half months later, he was in heaven.

Whether Christmases have fallen on happy or sad times, there has always been the love of family, the fellowship of friends, the inspiration of music, and, best of all—the ageless fascination of the Christmas story. It holds such great appeal because it is at once so human and so divine! We cannot imagine how dreary and hopeless life would be if God had not loved us and had not sent His son to redeem us and give us a sure hope for eternity!

From Meditations by Peter B. And his daughter, L. Marie. Edited for Space.

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful
Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:6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Advent Faith Practices

by Shalini Rajack-Sankarlal

I am listening to a group of children sing, "I am a promise" from Veggie Tales. The lyrics are: *"I am a promise, I am a possibility. I am a promise with a capital "P." I am a great big bundle of potentiality. And I am learning to hear God's voice. And I am trying to make the right choice. I am a promise to be anything God wants me to be."* How true.

Promise is a prominent element in the song, but so too is hope. Hope is present in the possibility of what God calls us to be. It is the hope that comes from God's promises of redemption and the yet-to-be-fulfilled promise found in Jesus' coming again. The song also urges the children to learn to hear God's voice and to make the right choice. To do this requires spiritual discipline. Wow, I should learn these Veggie Tales songs too!

Christians recognize and rejoice in the promise of redemption at Christmas time with the coming of the Christ child. We prepare for this "advent" or "coming" the four weeks prior to Christmas. We prepare for the Christ child to save us, forgive us our sins, and renew us. However, we should also remember the hope Israel had for the coming of the promised Messiah and the hope we have in his coming again. We should also encourage our loved ones to do the same so that we all hear God's voice even in this season of frenzy and fun.

Although there are many Advent devotionals available, I am drawn to using a Jesse Tree in my daily discipline. The idea originates from Isaiah 11:1, "A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit" (NIV). Historically, churches used Jesse trees to depict either Christ's genealogy as noted in Matthew 1:1–16 or representatives from the genealogy.

The Jesse tree provides a visual reminder that Christmas is part of the bigger story of God's plan for salvation and our need for it. It incorporates several practices that nurture spiritual discipline in children (or adults), such as the establishing rituals, encouraging faith conversation, relationship building, and prayer.

To begin this tradition, you will need a Bible, a mini tree, and 25 ornaments. Then, starting on December 1, read a passage from Scripture and then hang one ornament (see pages 18–20 for suggestions) onto a small tree. You can make this activity as simple or elaborate as you like, keeping in mind the ages of the people participating and your own schedule. You can buy a real or artificial tree, make one by placing several different twigs into a pot, or draw/print one onto a poster board. You can purchase or make your ornaments. Children may enjoy creating and colouring their own ornaments.

Also, involve older children by encouraging them to read the daily passage. You may want to read a longer passage ahead of time and then summarize it for the children, or use a Children's Bible. Younger children

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

Gen 1:31 NIV

can hang the corresponding ornament on the tree after the reading. Encourage a discussion about the passage by making "I wonder" statements such as, "I wonder how Mary felt after the angel visited her." End the devotion with prayer. Remember, this is your time, your pray should use simple language that all can participate in.

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests."
Luke 2:14 NIV

You might want to incorporate some additional activities into this time. Perhaps you will want to make a memory game out of the ornaments that are already on the tree. Before you start your daily reading, point to an ornament already on the tree and ask someone to tell the story behind it. Perhaps during your time, you will sing a verse or two from a favourite Christmas hymn. Adults and older children might want to create a Jesse Tree journal. Buy an inexpensive journal or notebook and each day you can draw or glue the day`s symbol into your notebook. Then you can take a few minutes to quietly reflect on the symbol and the daily Bible passage through your own personal time with God.

To add acts of service to your Advent celebrations, create an Advent gift box and place it next to the Jesse Tree. Just take a simple cardboard box and decorate it with gift wrap, colouring, or stickers. After each devotion time, place an item into the box which the children can give away after Christmas to people in need. Examples of items are non-perishable food items, other necessities, gently-used or new toys, crafts, even drawings.

Alternatively, create a miniature manger for Jesus. For every act of service, the children place a piece of straw (or yarn) into the manger so that by Christmas day the manger is ready for baby Jesus. Acts of service can be anything you do for someone else during that day. What a great way to celebrate and talk about the way we serve others!

By Christmas day, you will have a lovely illustration of the continuing story of God's everlasting promise and presence in our lives. You and your children will be able to point to the ornaments to tell and re-tell the stories associated with them.

I pray that the Jesse Tree encourages you and your loved ones to set aside time together to focus on all of God's promises this Advent. May you become even more familiar with the Word, find joy and blessing in it, and have fun doing so.

Daily Devotions

December 1 Genesis 1:26–31 Ornament: Earth	Creation: God made us in God's image. God created the earth for us to care for. God abundantly provides for us.
December 2 Genesis 3:1–13 Ornament: Snake	Sin: Humankind/We disobey God. We turn away from God. Yet God loves us anyway. We need to repent or turn around toward God.
December 3 Genesis 6:9–18 7:6–10, 17–23 9:8-17 Ornament: Ark/Rainbow	Promise: God promised Noah not to flood the earth again to destroy it. God judges us but also forgives us. God promises to always love us.
December 4 Genesis 12:1–7 15:1–6 Ornament: Stars	Abundant promise: Abraham faithfully follows God's call to him and God blesses him. God blesses us with the gift of the Son.
December 5 Genesis 21:1–7 Ornament: Baby	Answers pray: God gave Sarah a baby. God answers prayers even when it seems an impossible situation.
December 6 Genesis 22:1–3, 9–14 Ornament: Ram	God Provides: God asks Abraham to do something difficult and then provides in surprising ways. God always gives more to us than God asks.
December 7 Genesis 28:10–17 Ornament: Ladder	Steadfast God: Jacob awoke to realize that God was there. God is Emmanuel. God is always with us.
December 8 Isaiah 11:1–10 Ornament: Tree stump	Enduring God: Jesse is the Father of King David who God promised that his Kingdom would last forever.
December 9 Genesis 37:2–8, 12–28 50:15–21 Ornament: Colourful Coat	Powerful God: Joseph's brothers hated and mistreated him. Yet forgiveness and reconciliation resulted. God used bad to make good.

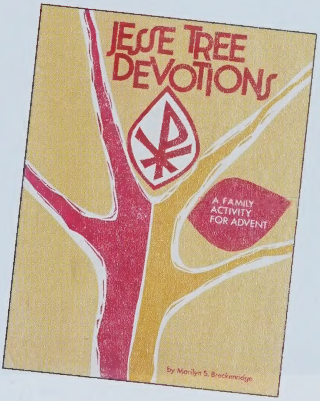
December 10 Exodus 3:1–12 Ornament: Burning Bush	God cares: God heard the cries of the people and called on Moses to deliver them from slavery.
December 11 Ruth 1:1–2 3:8–9 Ornament: Wheat	God is faithful: Ruth was faithful to Naomi, gave of herself for Naomi and was blessed by God.
December 12 1 Samuel 16:1–13 Ornament: Horn of oil	God has plans for us: God sees us differently than others do and uses us to God's will.
December 13 2 Samuel 5:1–5 Ornament: Crown	God leads his people: David, a shepherd boy who became king, leading his people.
December 14 1 King 2:1–4 3:3–16 Ornament: Owl	God wants us to think of others: Solomon asked for wisdom instead of making selfish requests. Likewise, our prayers and actions should not be selfish.
December 15 Isaiah 35:1–10 Ornament: Lush Landscape	God is in our midst: God has the power to cause transformation.
December 16 Micah 5:2–5 Ornament: Town of Bethlehem	God wants restoration for all: A ruler was predicted to come from Bethlehem to do this. At this time, we think of Jesus who brings us restoration.
December 17 Matthew 3:1–12 Ornament: River	Repentance: John the Baptist urged people to repent to prepare for Jesus' coming. We are called to do the same thing.
December 18 Luke 1:26–38 Ornament: Angel	God of all possibilities: Mary gave herself to the God in preparation for Christ's coming. How do we give of ourselves to God?
December 19 Luke 1:39–45 Ornament: Two friends	God provides support for Mary: God gave Mary support in the form of her family and friends. We have our Christian friends and family to help us keep up our faith as well.

December 20 Luke 1:46–55 Ornament: Songbook	Responding to God: Mary was a spiritual person. She praised God in song from Scripture. We prepare for God's coming by practicing a spiritual life.
December 21 Luke 2:8–14 Ornament: Shepherds	Sign of God's coming: God guided the shepherds to find Christ. God gives us signs as well.
December 22 Matthew 1:18–25 Ornament: Tools	God gives us courage to do things for God: God strengths Joseph after he listens to God. We should strive to hear God's voice.
December 23 Hebrews 1:1–3 Ornament: Sunburst	God spoke in different ways: through prophets, visions and other people. We are reminded that God also spoke through the Son who is the glory and image of God
December 24 Isaiah 9:2–7 Ornament: Sunrise	God is light over darkness: Christ, the light of God, shines on us through.
December 25 Luke 2:1–20 Ornament: Star	Christ's Birth.

Additional Resources

by Colleen Wood

Jesse Tree Devotional: A Family Activity for Advent
by Marilyn S. Breckenridge

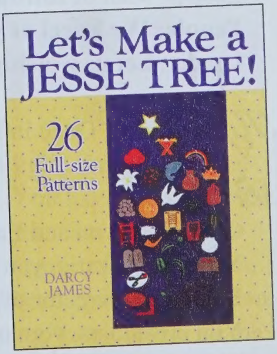


For a busy family, and one with younger children, this is the book I would buy! Each day includes a scripture reading, a short reflection, and a prayer. The centre of the book has a poster sheet that you can remove that has a tree and all symbols printed on it. You could have young children colour one daily, or if you are feeling more adventurous, children could cut one out each day, colour it, and hang it on a small Christmas tree or branch. I love that they suggest involving the children as much as possible.

The Jesse Tree: ADVENT Devotions for Personal Growth
by Debra Grant

This short devotional book walks you through the season of Advent using the Jesse tree symbols for daily devotionals. The readings are short, with a suggested scripture passage and prayer. The readings are written from an adult perspective, but would also work well for a family with children who are older (nine and up).

Let's Make a Jesse Tree: 26 Full-size patterns
by Darcy James



This book is for the craft minded individual and would lead to the creation of a beautiful keepsake. It provides instructions for making a banner that includes all the Jesse tree symbols. The banner is made so that each of the symbols attaches with velcro, one to be added daily. A scripture reading and short reflection is given for each day. It is work intensive, but if you have young teens that like to craft, creating this banner might be a wonderful part of the family celebration!

Christmas Worship Service

by Sarah Travis

This worship service highlights the mystery and wonder of the incarnation. Jesus was born in such a humble way. In some way beyond our imagining, this lowly birth magnified the glory of God's name before all people. God chose to dwell in the midst of creation. This is a cause for celebration!

Call to Worship

Leader: Word made flesh;
People: We welcome you!
Leader: Tiny, vulnerable child;
People: We gather you into our arms.
Leader: Man of sorrows, saviour and king;
People: We kneel at your feet lost in wonder, love and praise.
Leader: Let us worship God incarnate.

Hymn #166: Once in Royal David's City

Prayer

God of Heaven and Earth,
You are majestic, you are holy.
You are the creator of all.
You created us, you knew us before we were born;
You know all the beauty and tragedy of the human soul.

Out of your great love, you chose to breach the barriers
between earth and heaven,
and come to us as a living, breathing baby boy.
You chose to be born as we are born.
We are awestruck by this gift—
by your choice to create a space within yourself
for the meek and lowly,
for the poor, the young, the vulnerable.
As we worship you today,
we lift up our hopes that your kingdom come,
that the world be continually shaped in your image.
In the name of Jesus Christ,
Amen.

Scripture: Isaiah 9:2–7

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. (NRSV)

Meditation

What does it mean that God chose to be born in the way we are born? No sign of crowns or chariots. No gold. Born in the dark to a teenage mom who had no choice but to push through the shame. Born to a dad who had a sneaking suspicion that he had been played for a fool.

The cloths waiting to receive the little king were not clean or white or pristine, but dusty. Tattered and dirty like the edge of a worn sari which drags through soil that can barely remember rain.

Even as he is born there is a shadow lurking near, his mother knows that all is not well, at least not for him.

Fast forward three decades or so and it will all end just as it began in a haze of blood and sweat and minimal glory even for the Son of God.

Except there is glory … even in the stable … even in the tomb. An unexpected Glory, hidden and shrouded by the gasping cry of a needy infant, by the gasping cry of the mother who has lost him ....

Amid the pain and joy and confusion of birth, amid the choice to die in order to save all, God is glorious. The divine comes as a sleepy, hungry child. The divine comes as near to us as it is possible to be. Revealing earth as a hallowed space, birth as a re-creation, death as new creation.

Amid the ordinary workings of human life, comes the King of Glory: sweet and strong, vulnerable and relentless, risen with healing in his wings. The angels too treaded the muck of the stable in order to proclaim the arrival of God's greatest gift.

For today in the city of David has been born to you a saviour. Who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host Praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!" (Luke 2:14)

Offering

God has given us the greatest gift.
God has come near to us, lived among us.
In gratitude, we present our Christmas offering.

Litany Prayer (to be read in unison)

Lord, you were rich beyond all splendour, yet for love's sake, became so poor.
Leaving your throne in glad surrender, sapphire paved courts for stable floor.
Lord, you were rich beyond all splendour, yet for love's sake, became so poor.

You are our God beyond all praising, yet for love's sake, became a man.
Stooping so low, but sinners raising heavenwards by your eternal plan.
You are our God beyond all praising, yet for love's sake, became a man.

Lord, you are love beyond all telling; Saviour and King, we worship you.
Emmanuel, within us dwelling, make us and keep us pure and true.
Lord, you are love beyond all telling; Saviour and King, we worship you.

Words: Frank Houghton. (Book of Praise, 134)

Hymn #147: Angels we have heard on high

Benediction

We go into the dark of the December day
Seeking the holy amidst the ordinary
Looking for signs of God's life on earth.
Celebrating the birth, death and resurrection
Of the one who makes all things new.

Dust of the Sea

First of several articles on seasonings and spices from Biblical days.

by L. June Stevens

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. In so doing God provided an abundance of the element salt which is essential for our very lives. It is said that the world needs at least 40 million tons each year to fill the needs of the population. Without salt in our diets we could soon become ill and die.

Salt is a miracle seasoning, the 'spice of life.' Imagine a world without colour, smells, and flavours. It would be like a meal without salt. The first reference to salt in Scripture comes from Job 6:6: "Is tasteless food eaten without salt or is their flavor in the white of an egg?" (NRSV) That is still so true today. Some versions of the Bible speak of "the juice of mallows" which is just as bland as egg white.

A ready source of salt in ancient Palestine was the southern shores of the Salt Sea, now called the Dead Sea, the massive seven-mile-long salt cliffs of Jebel Usdum. In the Bible, the Valley of Siddim is referred to as the Sea of Salt (Genesis 14:3) and at 417 metres below sea level, it is considered the lowest point on earth. Its salinity prevents the existence of any animal forms.

The reference to salt in Job is followed by one of the most catastrophic stories of the Old Testament, the story of Lot who lived near one of the most depraved cities, Sodom. Ezekiel called the people "arrogant, overfed and unconcerned." The city was prosperous, and the people lived an easy and successful life in what was a sexually violent society. Lot, victim of the city's lust, could not bear to leave it until he was forced by angels of the Lord to flee its destruction. Although the family was warned not to look back, Lot's wife relented and was turned into a pillar of salt (Genesis 19:26). I imagine her looking washed out and white, like an alabaster statue.

Salt has an interesting and colourful history. An old Norwegian superstition says a person will shed as many tears as will be necessary to dissolve the salt spilled. The English believed that every grain of salt spilled represented future tears. Germans thought that spilled salt represented enmity. The French throw a little spilled salt behind them to hit the devil in the eye. In the United States, people toss a pinch of spilled salt over the left shoulder to keep evil away. Roman soldiers were paid ‘salt money’, from which the word salary is taken.

If one looks closely at Leonardo da Vinci’s painting of the Last Supper, there is an overturned salt cellar in front of Judas Iscariot, which is said to enforce the belief that spilled salt is a sign of treachery.

More battles have been fought over salt than over gold. Homer called salt ‘divine’, and Plato a “’substance dear to the Gods’. Shakespeare mentions it 37 times in his plays. Salt was often traded ounce for ounce for gold. The early Chinese used coins made of salt.

Nobel Prize winner, Chilean poet Pablo Neruda in the last lines of his poem ‘Ode to Salt’, called it ‘dust of the sea’. Salt teaches us, he concludes, the “central flavor of the infinite.” Not long ago, my four-year-old granddaughter asked me how God made this whole world. I look forward to sharing more with her what a great God we have that can be explained through a grain of salt.

Like anything that is multi-purpose, salt is an element capable of many things, symbolically, metaphorically, and in actuality. It is a seasoning, a preservative, a disinfectant, a unit of exchange, a component of ceremonial offerings, and so much more. Salt was so valuable that it was taxed by leaders of many regimes, including the famous salt tax imposed by the British East India Company on India. This culminated in violent protests and the radical involvement of Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi. Salt is also used in ceramic glazes, to make soda or soda ash, as a de-icer, in textile dye, and water softening.

In the Old Testament especially, the use of salt is symbolic. Offerings such as grain and birds or animals were to be salted before being sacrificed as part of the covenant which ancient Israel had with the Lord. (See Leviticus 2:13; Numbers 18; and Ezra 6:9 for examples.) Metaphorically, salt signifies permanence, loyalty, durability, fidelity, usefulness, and

Let your speech
always be with grace,
seasoned with salt, that you may know
how you ought to answer each one.

Colossian 4:6 NKJV

value. To share salt with another has been since ancient times a gesture of peace and goodwill.

Many commonly used expressions involve salt: a pinch of salt; below the salt; worth one's salt; throw salt over your shoulder; spilling salt brings bad luck, salt of the earth … I leave these with you to explore the significance for yourself.

The right amount of salt is vital to good health. Forty percent of the population does not have enough iodine in their diet. Iodine is needed for the production of the thyroid hormone, but is not produced by the body. Today development agencies support the use of iodized salt, especially in third world countries.

When I was young, it was not unusual to see persons with goitre, something rarely seen today. Goitre produces a very large swelling of the neck often caused by an iodine deficiency, an overactive or an underactive thyroid gland. The thyroid gland is a very sensitive gland that controls growth and metabolism. As one who has lived with hypothyroidism since my early twenties, I can testify to the discomfort involved. The body doesn't contain significant amounts of iodine which is necessary for thyroid hormone. Thus, iodine is used to treat thyroid disease which is why major efforts have been made by development agencies and medical groups to provide iodine to people, especially children, in third world countries to prevent iodine deficiency.

Salt is important to animals as well as people. Today, as thousands of years ago, animals are given salt licks to keep them alive and well. Simple salt blocks for livestock feeding were first marketed in 1918 by Morton's Salt, a US company, and then enhanced with minerals and vitamins for healthy growth. The province of Ontario is the major salt-producing province in Canada accounting for over nine million tons year.

It was not that long ago that salt cellars adorned our dining room tables. My mother used them in the mid 1920s. Known to be used in the Old Testament, 2 Kings 2:20-22 records Elisha as saying, "Bring me a new bowl (cruse) and put salt in it."

In the New Testament gospels of Matthew (5:13-16), Mark (9:50), and Luke (14:34-35) are found the most quoted scriptures on salt. As one who often used everyday terms that people would understand to illustrate a theological point, Jesus uses common, ordinary, everyday salt. Jesus acknowledges that "Salt is good …" then asks them how if salt loses its saltiness, can it be made salty again?

Although some of the crowd from the mountainside who had just listened eagerly to the Beatitudes pressed against them, Jesus spoke directly to the disciples, in an effort to train them to carry on his ministry after his death. He tried to explain the cost of being a disciple. What was it that salt symbolized in Scripture that it could be used as a lesson?

Salt is a symbol of wisdom and knowledge. Jesus wanted to impress upon his followers that one must be able to discern when to take things 'with a pinch (or a grain) of salt', in making wise decisions. As to their speech being 'seasoned with salt' it never hurts to use strong and colourful words to help people understand the message, and to choose the right words. Paul used salt as it relates to wisdom in Colossians 4:5; "always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one" (NKJV).

But what happens if salt loses its savour? What if the disciples, or bringing this discussion up to date, what happens if we as Christians lose our effectiveness? It is easy to become contaminated by the ways of the world. The careless use of slang and swear words in songs and conversations; loose moral behaviour on the part of many; disdain for family relationships; and lack of patriotism towards country are some of the ways our salt can lose its savour. If the words we use lose their effect, then we lose respect and our message loses its credibility. Jesus warned the disciples that they should be 'in the world' but not 'of it'. When there is too much sand in the salt under our feet, it becomes contaminated and must be thrown away.

Jesus says we must have salt in ourselves and have peace one with another. This implies friendship and compassion between like-minded people and openness to everyone else who crosses our path.

Like food, life is flavourless without spirit moving through it. Life needs spice. We are called to be the salt of the world. One of the most profound things about salt is that when it is used it loses itself. Salt in food makes its contribution and then it is gone. True servant-hood means giving of ourselves to God and others without fear or our own lives.

Think of that the next time you pick up the salt shaker and add salt to your food. Do you add salt to the lives of others?

God's Creative Power

by Claire Lemiski

I listened intently as my new Hungarian friend, Flora, spoke quietly. Flora was translating as a local potter from Mezőtúr described her art, the clay in her hands becoming softer as she kneaded it against the wooden table. Then, a whirring sound as the wheel began to spin, and a gentle thud as the clay landed on it.

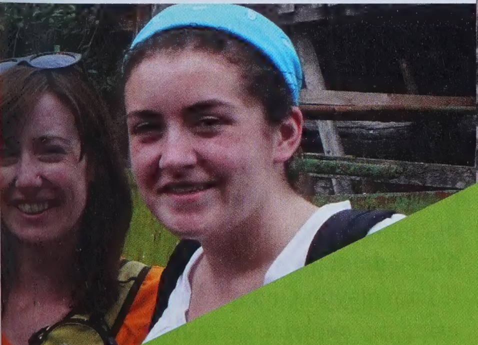
As early as the 16th century, Mezőtúr was a major pottery centre. The colours and designs tell stories—windows into Hungary's rich cultural history. For five days in July, this town of about 19 000, hosted 3000 visitors attending the Csillagpont (Starpoint) Festival. Youth in Mission, a ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC), sent a group of five delegates.

With apparent ease, the potter's hands drifted up and down, in and out, as she shaped the walls of her clay pot. I was mesmerized. Smooth curves, perfectly proportioned, a work of art. When she was satisfied, she stopped the wheel and carefully moved her creation to the table to dry. Then I heard Flora say, "Who would like to try it for themselves?"

I watched as my friends formed their clay into shallow dishes, small pots, and tall jars. The potter coached them with Flora translating, "pull the clay closer," "keep your fingers tight," and "not so fast" lest the clay fly off the wheel. Then it was my turn. "I've

been paying attention," I thought, "surely I can do this too." I started shaping the clay with my hands, but as it spun around, it started to dry out. I frequently needed to add water so I could continue forming the pot.

Recalling the flowing curves of my mentor's art, I attempted to coax the edges outwards, then inwards again. Somewhere along the way, a bump arose on the top lip of my pot, "It adds character," I decided. I slowed the wheel to a stop, and used a piece of string to slice the bottom of my creation off the surface. The potter picked it up and smiled as she held it up to her eye and peaked through a hole in the thin bottom. "She'll help you patch that up," Flora assured me.



Our eyes and hearts were opened to a world beyond everyday life in Canada

Learning about pottery at the Starpoint Festival in Mezőtúr was more than just a fun afternoon activity though. It stuck with me throughout the rest of the week, and the week following, as our group of five Canadians visited various mission sites in sub-Carpathian Ukraine. The Lord gave a message to the prophet Jeremiah at a potter's house. Jeremiah 18:4 says, "The pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him." Then the Lord told Jeremiah, "Like clay in the hands of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel." Throughout my two weeks in Eastern Europe, I asked, "What does that mean for me? How am I like clay in God's hands?"

Starpoint

Each day of the festival began with a devotion in English before breakfast. The morning program included worship and lectures in Hungarian followed by small group discussions. After lunch, there were a variety of programs to choose from and then worship in English and activities with the international group. I was reminded that if I am clay in God's hands, daily acts of discipleship, such as worship, prayer, and small group discussions, are the water that keeps me from drying out.

Sub-Carpathian Ukraine

After the Starpoint festival, we travelled to Ukraine with David and Anna Pandy-Szekeres. David and Anna are PCC missionaries, who are serving the Reformed Church of Sub-Carpathian Ukraine (RCCU), a church of ethnic Hungarians in Ukraine. Throughout the week I reflected that if I am clay in God's hands, God was using my experiences at the mission sites we visited and with the people we met to mould me.

We met a wonderful woman

named Mariska neni (aunt), who has witnessed many changes in her lifetime. Mariska neni lives as a minority Hungarian in Ukraine in the village of Tivadarfalva. She turned 88 this year and has incredible stories of joy, struggle, and faithfulness. She told us how pastors were taken to concentration camps during Stalin's rule. Mariska neni cared for the families left behind, even when she herself was sick. She shared about the time when her chickens—all 24 of them—were stolen. She prayed, "Why couldn't the thieves have only stolen half the chickens, and left the other half for me?" The next year, she bought 24 more chickens. This time, only half her chickens were stolen—an answer to prayer, she told us! She and her neighbours live like the early church we read about in Acts, sharing their possessions, praying together, and continually giving thanks, no matter what their circumstance. From the moment we crossed the threshold into her home, we were overwhelmed by a great Love. The presence of the Holy Spirit was so alive and strong there that it was hard to leave.

We visited Roma villages throughout the region where mission groups have been involved in building roads and water wells. Much effort has also been invested in establishing kindergartens for the children, who would not otherwise have the access or resources to obtain education that we take for granted. We also visited farms, an orphanage, children's camps, and schools. We saw how the church is serving a region where many people experience hardship in their daily lives.

As I continued learning about the lasting impact that Communism has had on the sub-Carpathian region, many questions arose. What would it mean for me if my church was taken over and shut-down by an anti-Christian government? How would I feel, if changing national borders meant I could no longer visit my family in a neighbouring town? What would life be like if I was an illiterate child who had to beg in the streets in order to survive?

Our eyes and hearts were opened to a world beyond everyday life in Canada, and I think that through the Holy Spirit, God's creative power was at work in each one of us. There may be imperfect bumps, or holes that need patching. But perhaps it is the questions we ask, and the journeys of faith seeking understanding, that form us as God moulds us into the best versions of ourselves.

Book Reviews

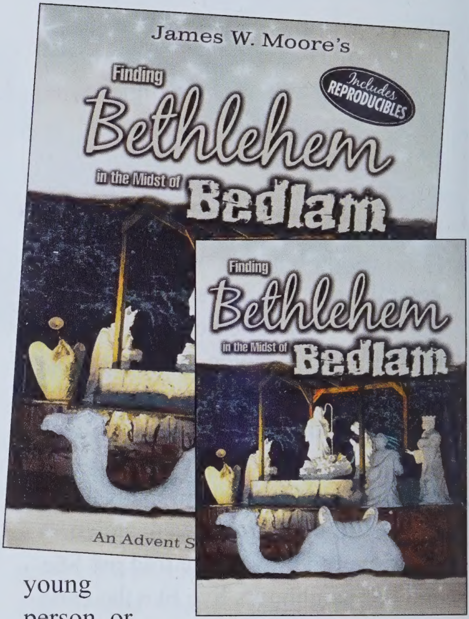
Finding Bethlehem in the Midst of Bedlam

by James W. Moore

I was immediately attracted to this resource because there is a child, youth, and adult version of these books. What a wonderful way for a church to encourage all ages this Christmas.

The Advent Study for Children would be a wonderful Sunday school curriculum or could be adapted to an evening program like Messy Church. There is too much material for each week, but teachers would have lots of options to choose from so could find something that would work well for the size and age of their class. There are active activities, crafts, puzzles, stories, and rhymes. The children begin in Nazareth their first week, then journey to Bethlehem for week two. They will then travel to the shepherd's field, and as they finish, the children will consider what they should do now that Christ has been born.

I love that the Advent Study for Youth is set up to be used by a group, perhaps in a Sunday school setting, but then sent home with the young person for a brief daily devotion. What a great way to encourage young people to start a habit of daily devotions. During the longer session each week, there is an introductory article that could be read by each young person, or summarized by the leader if you have a younger group. The session then includes a responsive liturgy as you light advent candles, followed by a scripture reading and discussion time. Finally there are some options for response: writing a song or rap, having a speaker, baking cookies to share, creating paper chains, or journaling. Again, there are plenty of options to choose from and some take more time and planning than others.

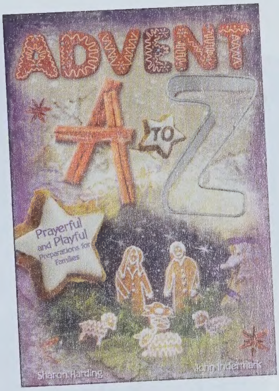


Finally in the adult study, which is set up similar to the youth study, you are presented with a weekly reflection that can be done on your own or in a group, and a daily individual study. For use in a group, I did find the weekly reflection a little long, but if group members came prepared, having read the article ahead of time, the group time could be spent reading the scripture passage, using the discussion questions, in prayer, and talking about the daily devotions. I really love the format of the daily devotions. They have a short scripture passage, a short reflection on the passage, and two questions to reflect on, with space for writing your thoughts. Overall, I think this book would be useful for small groups during Advent, or for use on your own. It also might be great for couples who want to spend some time together this Advent sharing and reflecting on their faith and their Christmas celebrations.

Advent A to Z: Prayerful and Playful Preparations for Families
by Sharon Harding

The introduction to this book immediately impressed me. It gives some great ideas for how to use this book with different groups and permission for not completing all the activities, but choosing activities that suit your family's schedule and ages.

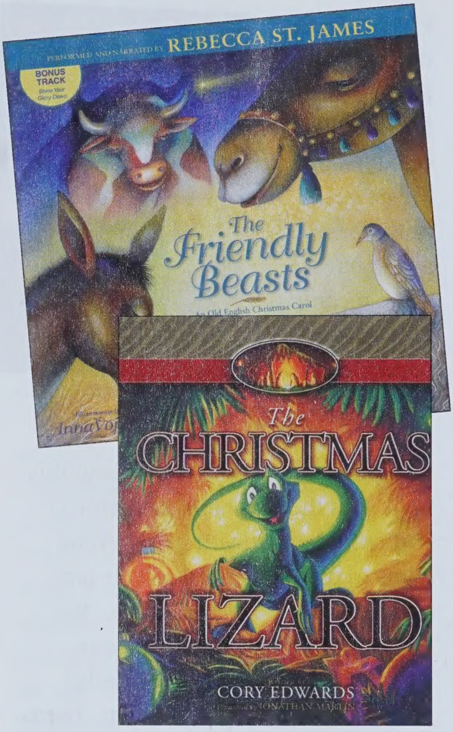
I did find the daily devotional a little long for young children, but they do suggest when using it with young children, that an adult can summarize the reading. I also found the discussion questions a little heavy for younger children, and the adult questions didn't necessarily catch my attention, or I found they were topics I had reflected on many times before. For families or adults that are newer to faith, these might have more meaning, though then sometimes the 'churchy' language might be a barrier.



One thing I really liked about this book was the daily outreach project that each day had you gather some coins to put into a outreach jar (an amount equivalent to your age, the number of light switches in your house, etc.). I also liked the daily journaling/drawing suggestion. There were many great activities, but I think I would use this book more for ideas than as a daily devotional.

Growing Justice: KAIROS Advent Resource 2013

For those who are unaware, KAIROS is the ecumenical justice organization of eleven Canadian churches, church agencies, and religious communities, including the Presbyterian Church in Canada.


PERFORMED AND NARRATED BY REBECCA ST. JAMES
BONUS TRACK
The Friendly Beasts
An Old English Christmas Carol
The CHRISTMAS LIZARD
CORY EDWARDS

This resource would help you to engage your church, all ages, a little differently this Advent.

KAIROS explores our relationship with the earth, and all who dwell in it, in this new resource. It features worship materials and activity ideas about faith and justice issues and the Advent themes of hope, peace, joy, and love. It includes four sessions and each session includes the lighting of the advent candle, prayers, scripture commentary (for the Revised Common Lectionary, Year A), and some background and action items on issues such as HIV/AIDS, human rights, and water.

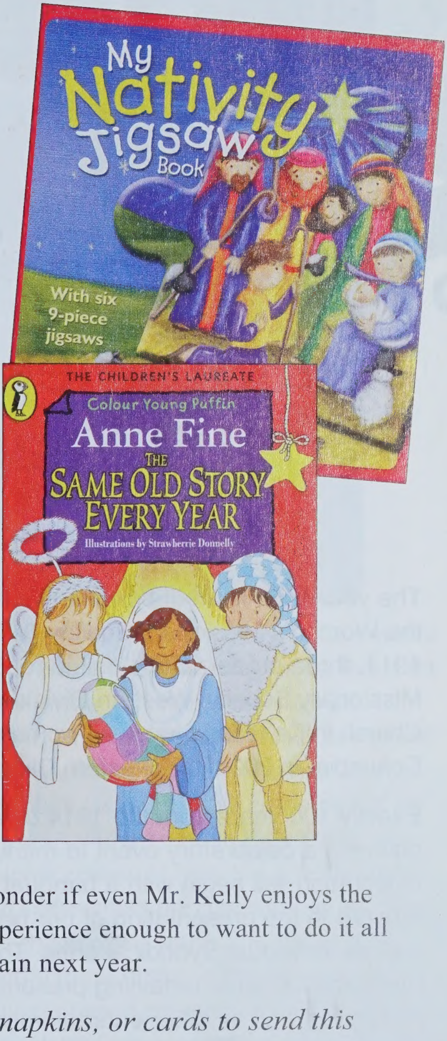
The resource has instructions for the creation of an Advent Garden, a spiral pathway that connects us to ourselves, each other, and the earth. The evergreen branches remind us of God's love for creation. This would be a great resource for a worship leader or minister who is looking to add some justice education into their congregation's Advent celebrations.

The Friendly Beasts: An Old English Christmas Carol
performed and narrated by Rebecca St. James
illustrated by Anna Vojtech

This would make a lovely gift for a child ages 3-5. If you know the carol, The Friendly Beasts, then you know the text of this book. The book contains the text, illustrated with gorgeous pictures. You also receive a CD with the book that contains the carol, an additional song, and the narration of the book.

The Christmas Lizard
by Cory Edwards
illustrated by Jonathon Martin

What does a lizard have to do with Christmas? Well, this book begins by letting you know that Oscar, the lizard, was a Christmas present. Oscar escapes and explores the house that is ready for Christmas, complete with hung stockings, a decorated tree, and a talking nutcracker. He learns that Christmas is about parties, free stuff, family, and helping others. In the end, he learns the true meaning of Christmas from the angel at the top of the tree as she directs him to the nativity set. It is quite a lovely book with fun illustration which would be good for children four to eight years old.



My Nativity Jigsaw Book
by Christina Goodings
illustrated by Rebecca Elliott

This is not just a book, but also includes six 9-piece jigsaw puzzles. The story is told in simple words, with the puzzles illustrating the story. This would be a lovely Christmas book, providing hours of fun, for a 3-year-old.

The Same Old Story Every year
by Anne Fine
illustrated by Strawberrie Donnelly

This is a simple chapter book for early readers, ages 6-8. However, anyone, young or old, who has organized, or even sat through a children's Christmas nativity, will enjoy this little book. It is the story of a teacher, Mr. Kelly, who every year must tell, "the same old story." Although problems arise, young Maya save the day and we are left to wonder if even Mr. Kelly enjoys the experience enough to want to do it all again next year.

Looking for stocking stuffers, Christmas napkins, or cards to send this season? The Book Room has a wonderful selection of items, most with a Christian message. What a great way to spread Christ's love during the Christmas season.

THE **Book Room**
wms PCC

The Book Room
50 Wynford Drive,
Toronto, ON M3C 1J7
416-441-1111 800-619-7301
bookroom@presbyterian.ca

WMS Celebrates 100 Years

May 15, 2014

The year 2014 is an important milestone in the history of the Women's Missionary Society (WMS). On May 15th, 1914, three organizations united to form the Women's Missionary Soceity, Western Division, The Presbyterian Church in Canada. It involved women from Quebec to British Columbia. In 2004, the Western Division was dropped.

Exactly 100 years from the 1914 date, the WMS is planning a celebratory event to mark the occasion. The celebration will begin with a banquet lunch. We are looking forward to the presentation of our new national banner as well as individual Synodical ones. There will be displays, memorabilia, an entertaining presentation of the WMS history, as well as other entertainment as part of the celebration. Former WMS missionaries, president, and staff will be present to celebrate with us.

Come Celebrate

Date: May 15, 20

Time: 1–4 p.m.

Where: Sheraton
Parkway Ho

Cost: $30

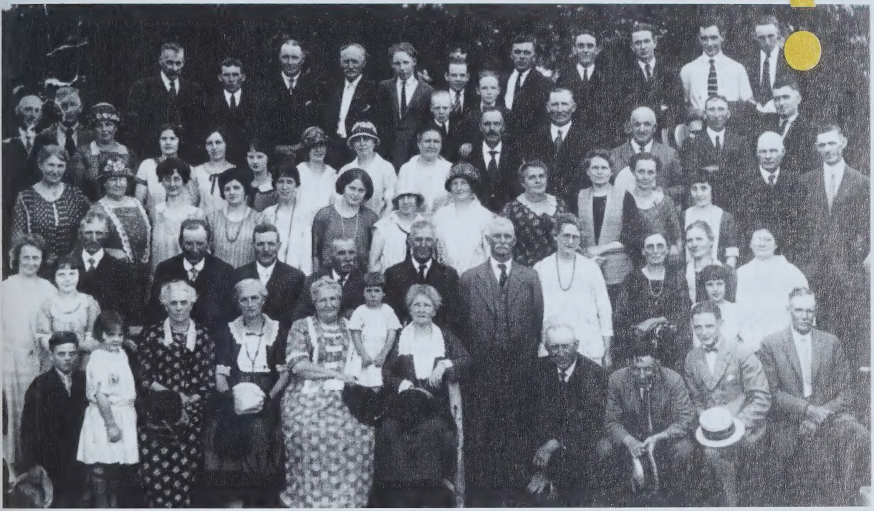
Photos courtesy of The Presbyterian Archives

Registration

All WMS members and friends are invited to attend the WMS 100th Anniversary celebration.

The cost is $30, which includes the banquet lunch. Contact Alana Martin, WMS 100th Anniversary, 50 Wynford Drive, Toronto, ON, M3C 1J7
800-619-7301 or 416-441-1111 ext. 322

Can you find Hugh Turner?



The members of North Caradoc-St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Strathroy, Ontario would like your help in identifying Hugh Turner in this group photo from the early 1900s. This is the only photograph they have of the man whose bequest to the church has had such an enduring impact on the congregation's life and ministry. The only problem is they don't know which one he is! In 1943, Mr. Turner left two shares of Huron and Erie Savings and Loan Society, valued at $200, to North Caradoc Church through his estate as an endowed gift for the church. Seventy years and several mergers and stock splits later, Hugh Turner's gift of $200 has grown to be worth over $160,000! The income generated from the investment has provided funding for building projects at the church and enabled the congregation to hire a part-time staff person to expand their ministry with children and youth. The people of North Caradoc-St. Andrew's may not be able to identify Hugh Turner in this old photo, but they can certainly identify the signs of his continued presence among them through the endowment fund established through his bequest.

To learn how you can make a lasting difference through a gift of stock, a bequest in a will or some other planned gift, contact:

The Planned Giving Office
The Presbyterian Church in Canada
50 Wynford Drive, Toronto, ON
1-800-619-7301
plannedgiving@presbyterian.ca
or go to www.presbyterian.ca/provisionaries

Planting seeds of hope.
For generations to come.

Mission In Action

Todd and Annika Statham
Malawi

Visiting a prison in Malawi is not a pleasant experience. I imagine the sense of confinement you feel when the iron gate clangs shut behind you, as well as the palpable frustration and despondency in the air, is universal to a prison no matter which country it is in. But because the country of Malawi is so poor, the few prisons I have visited here seem especially desolate. I visited Mikuyu Prison just this past week along with many of the students and staff of Zomba Theological College. Mikuyu is Malawi's most infamous prison: it was constructed by the dictator Hastings Kamuzu Banda to hold political prisoners. Many significant voices for freedom and human rights in Malawi were silenced in Mikuyu—always without a trial and often ending in execution. With this history in mind, as I entered the prison the feeling in my gut was one of God-forsakenness, accompanied with the smell of the overflowing pit toilets, unwashed clothes, and the sight of high walls with small barred windows, and a small courtyard crowded with hundreds of inmates.

But of course Mikuyu is not God forsaken. And our College went there precisely to remind the prisoners that Jesus loves them and that the church has not forgotten them. This is a big step for the Zomba Theological College community. Prison

chaplaincy (in other words pastoral care for prisoners) isn't widespread by any means among the churches, and where it exists, it is typically underfunded and understaffed. Shame plays an important role in Malawian society, and many of the prisoners are neglected for having brought shame upon their families, communities, and (if they are baptized) churches. Zomba Theological College staff is hoping to make pastoral visits to the various prisons in our area a regular part of the students' outreach and pastoral formation. However, in Malawi one cannot visit another's home with empty hands! Appropriate gifts need to be brought. And the College was struggling to find the money to bring the prisoners a few items they desperately needed.

A small grant of money through International Ministries, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, was a God-send. It allowed students to buy boxes of soap and Vaseline for the inmates' hygienic needs, as well as sugar and even a few goats for their meals.

The officer in charge of the prison was full of gratitude to the College and to the PCC. As the prisoners cheered and clapped, she mentioned that funds are so scarce at present that their one meal per day is often missed; the inmates never have meat and rarely sugar for their porridge. She also made a point that struck me: don't look too hard in judgment on these boys, she said, for maybe the next Nelson Mandela is among them. This was not only a discreet way of saying that perhaps not everyone incarcerated at Mikuyu deserves to

Built for political prisoners in Banda's day, Mikuyu now incarcerates juveniles (14–22)

be there, it was also a reminder to the prisoners not to lose hope. Canadian Presbyterians can take heart in having provided the means—from a great distance!—for ZTC students to offer a "cold cup of water to the least of these" (Matthew 10:42).

Paul McLean
Taiwan

How do translators translate the words for God or Lord in Taiwan's indigenous languages? How do we translate abstract words such as love, peace, or justice? How do we communicate the truths about God written down 2000-3000 years ago in the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament in such a way that both elderly and young people can understand them clearly and correctly in their mother-tongue?

For four days in early July, twenty translators representing five indigenous language Bible translation projects (Amis, Bunun, Drekay, Paiwan, and Tsou), the New Taiwanese Bible translation project, plus two visitors from the Hong Kong Bible Society, along with United Bible Societies (UBS) and Bible Society in Taiwan (BST) staff gathered together in the beautiful mountain village of Pei-nan in Taitung County on the south-east coast of Taiwan for intensive training, learning, and mutual encouragement.

Teaching sessions each morning (8:30–12:00) were led by UBS Global Translation Advisers, Dr. Simon Wong (Hong Kong) and Dr. Yu Sueeyan (Malaysia), and BST Translation Advisers, Dr. Liang Wang-huei (Taiwan) and Dr. Paul McLean (Canada). During the afternoon sessions, teams gained practical hands-on training in how to use the UBS's specialized Bible translation software, Paratext.

Evenings were left unscheduled. People could walk around the beautiful grounds, relax at the local hot springs, or get together with translation advisers for more practice using Paratext. God provided in a special way on Wednesday night. Dr. Simon Wong and I worked alongside the Rev. Manias Chang Yu-fa. Now 75-years-old, Manias has been a key translator on the Bunun project since it started with the creation of a written Bunun script in the 1950s. We successfully helped him learn tools in Paratext that will simplify the drafting process for the Bunun Old Testament.

Just as we were finishing, Rev. Kualj, the lead typist for the Paiwan translation team came to us with an urgent request. Paratext was "freezing" whenever it tried to read summary sections from the 1993 Short Old Testament. If we could not solve this problem, he and the Paiwan Team would have great trouble making progress. As we brainstormed, God gave us a new insight and provided the solution. Kualj worked on it until 2 a.m. The next morning, he joyfully reported that he had made the necessary adjustments. We praised God for helping us solve this difficult problem—and while we were still meeting together! The Paiwan Team can now move forward more efficiently and accurately.

We are deeply grateful for the board of the BST who generously supported this important training event, and for BST staff who helped with planning, hospitality, and logistics. These days of training offered us all a rare opportunity to share our diverse experiences of translating the Bible, to laugh and learn together, and to support one another in this very challenging and specialized mission work.

"...my word that goes out from my mouth will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." (Isaiah 55:11)

Edited for space. The complete article can be found at: http://pccweb.ca/paulmclean/2013/07/25/ubs-bst-bible-translators-training-workshop-in-taitung-july-8-11/

Overseas Staff Birthdays

December

15 – Rick Allen, Kenya
29 – Rachel Julianna Pandy-Szekeres, Hungary

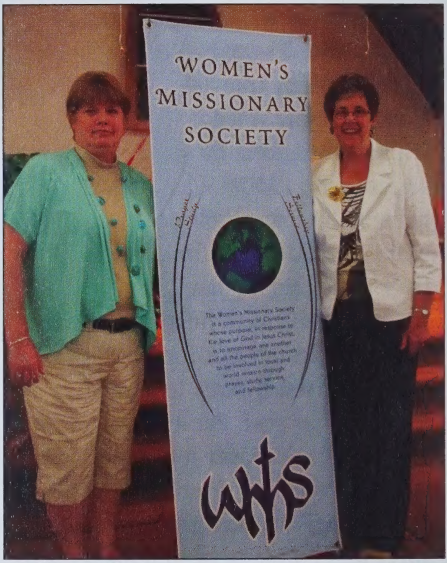
Presbyterial

Westminster Presbyterial held their Annual Meeting on February 14 at Kerrisdale Presbyterian Church in Vancouver. The Rev. Steve Filyk led us in a worship service and the Rev. Betty McLagan presented an interesting report on her recent trip to Israel with The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Betty enabled us to feel both the excitement of walking where Jesus walked and the sadness of the hatred, fear, and hostility in the land.

The Rev. Joyce Davis presented her recently published book *From the Bottom Up* on the 100th year history of Diaconal Ministries in the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

The afternoon started with the singing of some favourite hymns followed by Ann Friesen who led a beautiful memorial service to remember the five members who passed away in 2012. Our afternoon speaker was Kathleen Christie, a nurse with a heart for mission. She demonstrated three projects in Kenya citing the criteria that made two of these projects successful—people who understand the background, communication, careful planning, flexible programs, clear objectives, and appraisals.

Arlene Duff installed the new Presbyterial Executive.



Sarnia Presbyterial held their Spring Meeting at Paterson Memorial Church with the theme, Missionaries "R' Us. Mary Jane Bisset, the new Regional Staff Person for Education and Development, was the guest speaker who spoke on beginnings and endings, basing her thoughts on the Natalee Sleeth hymn, In the bulb there is a flower. Changes will take place and we cannot stay in a cocoon. President Beverley Cassel, who attended WMS Council at Crieff Hills said that the new mission study will focus on maternal and child health.

Marilyn Rawson closed the meeting with a story on Fanny Crosby, who wrote over 1000 hymns, many of which are favourites.

Maitland Presbyterial held their Fall Rally on September 16 in Ripley with the theme, "Do you know God's Plan?" (Jeremiah 29:11) The evening began with delicious desserts served by the Ripley women. Betty Johnson brought greetings and led us in a time of singing. The Brussels group led an enlightening worship, and we enjoyed hearing a letter from Nick McArter, a child we sent to Camp Kintail. He sent a very warm thank you to WMS for the opportunity.

Dr. Rev. Ted Creen, Director of Huron Feathers, was our guest speaker. Creen is a retired Presbyterian minister from Owen Sound. Huron Feathers Presbyterian Centre, on Sauble Beach, has been sharing God's love since the 1960s. Creen has also has visited Malawi. He spoke about his trip and shared many amazing stories of God's love among the people of Malawi. The Church in Central Africa is alive and relying on God.

Joan Threndyle, from Kincardine, was recognized for her diligent contribution to the work of the WMS through the years, and was presented with an Honourary Membership. Our annual meeting will be held in Wingham, January 20, 2014.

Barrie Presbyterial held their Annual Meeting on May 8 at Elmvale Presbyterian Church. Evelyn Horne, president, welcomed all and constituted the meeting with prayer. The Rev. Paul Sakarov, Elmvale's minister, and Dolly Moulden, WMS group president, extended greetings as well. Mary Ritchie was pianist for the day. June Campbell led the devotions based on 1 Corinthians 12 and the annual reports were accepted and approved.

The Synodical delegates gave interesting reports of the April meeting, and Elaine Steele and Mary Veale-Parker reported on the Council meeting with special attention to the WMS planned changes. Jill Pardy prepared and presented the memorial service for nine WMS ladies who had passed away, and Dorothy Ruddell reviewed several books from the Book Table. The Rev. Peter Ruddell led in prayer for various missionaries. Then, Jill Pardy thanked in rhyme the outgoing officers and Tori Smit installed the officers.

Following a delicious dinner, Tori Smit, Synod Education Consultant, told us that Moses was the first religious Christian Educator based on the scripture of Deuteronomy 6:4–9. Tori encouraged us to talk about our faith, prayer, and devotions, and to pass these stories along to the next generation. Tell the story and live it out in your life. Tori is very willing to give assistance to Church Schools, family-based ministry, and adult education, as well as speaking at meetings, events, and worship services.

The meeting closed with the benediction.

~Jill Pardy

Peterborough Presbyterial held its annual meeting on May 1 at

Retired mission staff: Ida White, Wilma Welsh, and Pauline Brown

Lakehurst Hall. Many reports were received from Council, Synodical, and Presbytery. Darlene Reid spoke on the God's Gifts Reused and amazed us with her many projects, taking used materials to make new things for children around the world. She welcomes volunteers into her home to sew teddy bears, clothing, and books; they also make crocheted mats from milk bags, and pack shoe boxes.

Synodical president, Lynda Grace, installed the officer. Then, ladies from Burnbrae conducted the Remembering Service for eight members who had passed away. The Rev. Terry Ingram of Lakefield conducted the closing communion service.

Local

Knox Presbyterian Church Morrisburg ON has been busy with their Spring activities. Besides their regular monthly devotional, the group toured the local food bank while using the *Glad Tidings* mission study, "Children in Poverty in Canada." They also conducted worship on Mission Awareness Sunday.

Their outreach this year includes food donations to the local food bank as well as the filling of backpacks with school supplies, which is a project of the food bank.

Paris Presbyterian Church WMS Helen Young Auxiliary celebrated their 75th Anniversary on September 12.

The event was well attended by members and friends and included a welcome, dessert, and special music. During our time of worship, we lighted three candles to represent the Trinity. We were reminded that although changes may take place in the Society one thing remains constant—our faith in the Creator and our desire to serve in love as Jesus taught.

Our guest speaker, Rev. Margaret Robertson, shared some memories of growing up on a farm and attending Paris Presbyterian Church, and her recent work as a representative with DOTAC (Diakonia of the Americas and Caribbean).

Remembering

Marjorie Shorting
Semper Fidelis WMS
Knox, Agincourt ON

Helen Billiald
Norma Martin
Alberton WMS
Alberton ON

Margaret Blackburn
Jean Woodley
Sarah Dunning WMS,
Knox Presbyterian Church
Dundas ON

Hendrika (Henny) Rus
St. Andrew's WMS
Huntsville ON

Mary Clark
St. Andrew's WMS,
Kingston ON

Barbara Breen
St. Andrew's WMS
Owen Sound ON

Helen Longmuir
St. Andrew's WMS
Scarborough ON

Jean Fitzgerald
Agnes Tolmie Evening
Auxilary WMS,
St. Andrew's Presbyterian
Church, Southampton ON

Marietta (Dixie) McBride
Margaret Kennedy
Auxiliary, Maisonneuve
Presbyterian Church
Montreal PQ

Circulation News

If you are the contact person for your group for *Glad Tidings* subscriptions, you should have received your renewal package by now.

When promoting the magazine, we do encourage you to remind subscribers of everything they get for their subscription rate:

- Reports on mission work accomplished by Presbyterians around the world
- Inspirational articles that inform and encourage individuals to reflect on their faith
- Information on the work of the WMS
- An educational mission study for home and group use that motivates action.

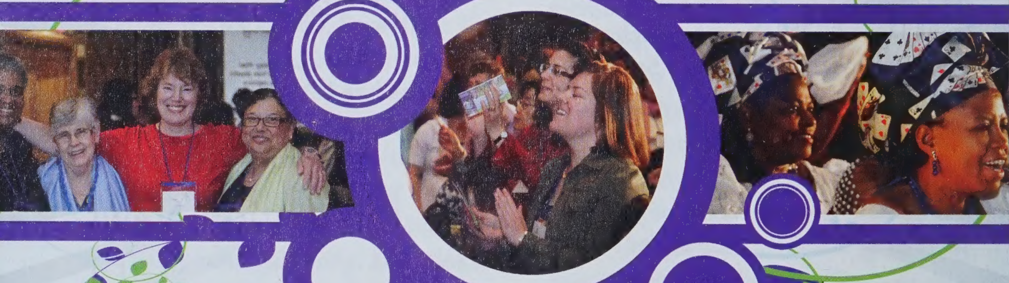
As always, we encourage individual subscribers and WMS groups to promote the magazine and give gift subscriptions. Glad Tidings has articles that will appeal to Christians, female and male, of all ages. Consider giving a gift subscription to your minister, their spouse, your church librarian, or a university student from your congregation. For new subscribers, first contact your congregation to find out if there is a WMS group you can subscribe with. If there is no group in your congregation, please contact Alana Martin directly for an individual subscription.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Alana Martin.

Burst Forth

Isaiah 35:1–10

National Presbyterian
Women's Gathering



DATE: May 16–19, 2014

PLACE: Sheraton Parkway Hotel, Richmond Hill, Ontario

REGISTRATION FEES: $350 before November 15, 2013
$450 after November 15, 2013 and before March 31, 2014

INQUIRIES:
womensgathering@presbyterian.ca
416-441-1111 or
800-619-7301 ext. 321

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT
womensgathering.ca

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